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**Constructions of Class, Race,
Ethnicity and Tolerance:
the Case Study of St Aber's and
Mawerley**

By

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Sociology

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I want to dedicate this thesis to my dad, who I wish was still here and able to see me finish this long journey.

To my dad, Αντώνης.

I declare that this thesis is submitted to the University of Warwick in support of my application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has been composed by myself and has not been submitted in any previous application for any degree.

Iro Konstantinou

Abstract

This thesis explores constructions of class, race, ethnicity and tolerance in a ‘monocultural’ private school; whose white, middle-class make-up, was a reflection of its affluent London setting. The study focuses, in particular, on how the school community made sense of the discourse of Fundamental British Values being promoted within UK schools. In this research, the notion of ‘British Values’ is utilised as the basis for an analysis of the values that were seen as significant within the school and exploration of who and what became valued vis-à-vis the school’s (and the wider community’s) normative behaviours.

The ethnographic nature of the case study allowed for various avenues for collecting qualitative data. Interviews, with staff, pupils and other members of the community, observations, events at the school and Mawerley; all provided me with great insights of the workings of the school and the locality.

The case study developed a number of key findings. Fairness and meritocracy which are considered to be core British values, and also placed at the heart of St Aber’s ethos, can form the basis for justifying exclusions. The school and the area formed a bubble which became a space for privileged white and middle-class practices to become habitual, acquiring moralistic nuances. Questions of British Values led to discussions around race, class, gender, and national belonging, transcending the confined boundaries of the school. The thesis argues that practices of exclusion and inclusion did not only revolve around Britain, and her values, but extended to the school and the locality’s practices. In this sense, I take these two contexts to form a *total locale* which shapes notions and ideologies and generates concealed boundaries within the all-encompassing nature of a middle-class white bubble.

Chapter One

Introducing St Aber's and Mawerley

In the UK, the school people attend can be one of the single most important determinants in how their lives will be shaped. With an educational system often criticised by the various stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, politicians, and policy makers, it can be stressful for parents to make the right choices when selecting a school. In this thesis, I aim to outline how this interplay of parental practice and school choice has an all-encompassing character, not only with regards to pupils' educational outcomes but also with the potential to shape broader views and beliefs. Moreover, however, I will try to show that it is not only the schools which have the potential ability to influence pupils, but it can be much broader than that. It will be argued throughout the thesis that the combination of the school and the habitus of the pupils is equally powerful, as everyday depictions of class, race, and gender encompass emblematic representations of what becomes of value.

Spending a year at St Aber's, a secondary private day school in South West London, with a long and intricate history, as I will describe below, was a very interesting experience, least of all because I had never personally experienced private education first-hand. The most prominent element I observed was the fact that the school positions and markets itself slightly different from other day private schools. Its quest to create well-rounded individuals and not be an academic hothouse has attracted the middle-class families of south west London in great numbers. Compared to the past, the numbers wanting to join the school have been going up, with longer waiting lists year by year. In 2017, an Open Day saw as many as 2400 people throughout the day walking around the school, as the Facebook page of the school stated. This thesis, therefore, aims to examine what factors have led to the school gaining such popularity. However, the following chapters will not be confined to examining the workings of the school but the narrative of the area where the

school is located in its entirety. Having been myself a resident of the surrounding area, Mawerley, it can be attested that the locality can be taken as a representation of the school: the demographics of the area have changed considerably in the last ten years and in its majority now it is inhabited by middle class and white professionals, as compared to the ethnically-diverse area it used to be. It has become a space which constitutes a bubble of affluence, comfort and self-assurance, amidst multicultural London, where class, whiteness, and notions of one's belonging are enacted and performed through everyday choices. Within this dual setting, pupils are educated, make friends, take part in sports and form opinions and ideas. Within this total locality, they form their subjectivities and prepare for their adult life. Therefore, this enclave of St Aber's – the school - and Mawerley – the surrounding area - becomes all-consuming and encompassing and served as the basis of my study.

With a shift to a neoliberal education the rise of accountability for public and private actions has resulted in the rise of standardisation and surveillance. This is manifested through a rhetoric of values across a number of areas of public and private life. British Values incorporated into the everyday life of schools, character education which values certain traits, valued cultural practices manifested and enacted through class and race, lifestyle choices which encompass wider questions of self-discipline – all form ways to mark one's position within society. The move away from agreed collective public and civil values to individualistic and private ones, has resulted in cohabitation but little meaningful interaction across diverse social groups. Public spaces, therefore, have the potential to function as means of symbolic power and allow access to those who conform to normative roles and actions. Consequently, individuals are given value through a social construction of 'Otherness which is premised upon moral value but with economic implications' (Paton 2014: 2). The following chapters aim to unpack how values are attributed or become devalued. More broadly, the research highlights how cultural practices become habitual and in the process, create enclaves of inclusion and exclusion in urban spaces.

A brief history of the school

St Aber's is in a unique position. Both next to several parks and commons and the railway lines: on the one hand, very tranquil and on the other, constantly reminded of how busy London is. Despite having massive grounds for sports and being surrounded by trees, giving it a feel of the suburban, the trains come every few minutes, so it is difficult not to be reminded of the links to the metropolitan city. The railway lines are also part of the school's history. A few decades ago, when there was a train accident, the pupils of the school helped those who were injured. As a result, they were praised for their actions and there is now a memorial statue outside the gates of the school, to remind them of their noble acts. The school was founded in the 16th century, and although it did not occupy its current location, there are paraphernalia kept reminding pupils of how the school started and its founding premise: *'to bring up children in virtue and good and laudable arts so that they might better live in time to come by their honest labour'*. St Aber's has been in Mawerley since 1883, and admittedly, it has seen many changes both because of historic events and because the dynamics of London have been shaped by globalisation. St Aber's started as co-educational, then became a boys' school and only admitted girls again in the 1990s. St Aber's was initially a boarding school, then became a boys' day school, then a state grammar school, and in the 1970s became again independent. The school has a long and complicated history, which is stressed in the school through pictures on the walls, old buildings and the very devoted librarian of the school who wrote two, rather long, books on the history of the school and how this history has made St Aber's what it is today.

The long history of the school was mentioned frequently by the staff, while pupils seemed more nonchalant about it. Despite the thriving academic and extra-curricular life of the school now, the more recent history of the school

was characterised by a student body which was not so academically engaged. The teachers who started teaching there in the 1980s and 1990s describe the school and the surrounding area as rough; they believe that pupils were unruly at the time and not devoted to academic pursuits. Arguably, the academic results were not as high back then; however, there is no one reason which can explain why this was the case. In the 1990s, when girls were allowed back at the school, a new Head was appointed a few years later and the school has become a very academically driven school; 2017 being the year when the school got its best GCSE results ever. The school prides itself on the amount of scholarships it gives to both academic and art scholars, but these scholarships can only be supplemented by parental income.

Most pupils lived within a few miles of the school. This fact revealed that the white middle-class professionals of Mawerley struggled to find state schools in the vicinity which would be deemed suitable for their offspring, something which was substantiated by the data collected. The area was host to white middle-class bankers, media producers, entrepreneurs, who can have high demands of the schools their children attend, as schooling can serve more purposes beyond academic results, and encompass character building as well.

However, despite the changes at the school level, this thesis will argue that the all-encompassing character of the student cohort was not the direct result of the school policies. The way that social advantage was reproduced within the school was a direct implication of the wider physical environment of the pupils including their family and the social spaces which were central to their everydayness, the school being only one of them rather than the primary focus of how practices became valued and normative.

It is this all-encompassing nature of the school in conjunction with the wider locale which I aim to analyse here. What I argue throughout the thesis is that the locale of the school and not just the school itself, along with the

socioeconomic background of the pupils and their families shape them and make certain practices part of their habitus while erecting boundaries to those who represent different values. Undeniably, these pupils live a life of advantage. They are part of a bubble which affords them a comfortable life, and it allows them to present themselves as liberal but only up to the point where their individuality, liberty and comfort are at risk. The participants used the word liberal to describe themselves not in the party political, nor the economic sense. Their use of the word 'liberal' is more to do with the idea of tolerant, welcoming, and accepting. Although I never questioned the term as it was used, it appeared to me that more often than not in my discussions with the participants it was used interchangeably to denote a frame of mind, which was taken to be what might be described in the media as the liberal metropolitan elites. This project will analyse why I call St Aber's and Mawerley a bubble, while analysing what contributes to the participants' views and the positions they hold, what defines valued positions and what is viewed as normal.

Similar questions relating to middle-class schooling have been posed before. For example, Ball and Nikita questioned how the new global middle classes (GMC) interact both with the educational market and the locale in which they reside. Some of their questions, which are still relevant and which also influenced the thinking for this research project to some extent, are outlined below:

What choices do the GMC make about the education of their children? What are their priorities regarding schooling and the knowledge, skills, abilities and sensibilities which they would like their children to develop? How are these priorities realised in relation to local educational opportunities? Do they seek out schools in which there are other children 'like ours'? Does the GMC retain an affiliation and a sense of belonging to their country of origin? What other affiliations do respondents hold (e.g. to professional

networks)? How are their social networks constituted and who figures in these networks? To what extent do the GMC interact with the people, facilities and structures in the localities in which they are currently living? What practices of spatiality do they engage in these localities? (Ball and Nikita, 2014).

Trying to unpack the processes of choosing schools and what drives middle-class parents to make particular decisions was one of my main research questions. However, the time of the study was also a unique time when schools were once again in the news as sites of social cohesion, integration, and silos of promoting the Fundamental British Values. With this in mind, this research project aimed to answer questions of values more broadly. The question of how British Values are perceived and enacted within a white, middle-class school was at the epicentre of this study. However, asking this question led to interrogations of issues which show the intersectionality of social settings: What structures are in place which potentially place schools at the forefront of teaching British Values? How are values more broadly perceived by those who hold positions of privilege? How do these positions of privilege affect perceptions of tolerance and belonging? How do questions of class and race interact with one's perception of the country and ideas of integration, a term central to British Values?

The leafy road to the school

I had lived in the area for almost three years before I started my fieldwork. I had walked by St Aber's before, but since I had no particular interest in what was there, I had never realised that all the big green spaces around there belonged to the school. It was only when I went for my first visit that I realised how big the school grounds really were.

Upon arriving at St Aber's, I was struck by the grandeur of the main building. I was greeted by the receptionist, Helen, a lovely woman who would go out of her way to help me find my way around the school throughout my time there. I signed in, was given a visitor lanyard and was escorted to an adjacent room. Various newspapers, biscuits, and magazines were laid out on the coffee table, along with plush sofas and thick carpets. Mr Jones, the Second Master, came to pick me up after 5 minutes and he was quite annoyed. One of the old ladies who lived in one of the streets near the school had called to complain. She claimed that St Aber's pupils were very noisy and loud on the way to school in the morning.

This cannot be our children, said Mr Jones. It is pupils from other schools. I will send round an email but our students do not behave like this.

This set the tone of how the various people at the school would describe the pupils or the school to me: the pupils were polite and tolerant; the school was welcoming and allowed pupils to explore their potential talents. I was given a tour around the campus, the sports grounds, the swimming pool, the spacious staff room, very much unlike any office rooms I had seen in my own professional career, the sixth form cafeteria, and all the other facilities which proved that the school was being continuously upgraded. There was a new arts centre that was being built while I was there and upon completion in the summer of 2017, a lot of departments would be relocated and/or refurbished. The same architect who designed the library had been commissioned for this new building. The purpose was to create a continuity, to ensure that the rich history of the school is not lost amidst the modernisation of the premises, as Mr Jones pointed out.

Sitting in the rich sofas, walking around the corridors with photos of notable alumni, and looking at the state-of-the-art laboratories and computer rooms reminded me of my own completely different educational experience.

Although we had some seriously committed teachers and the school was not an underfunded one, it was a state school in a small city on a small island. Teachers had to make do with limited facilities. This meant that any extra-curricular activities had to be paid for by the family. In my case, someone who liked to explore everything but lost interest fairly quickly, this meant that my parents over the years paid for German and French lessons, dancing and tennis, piano, and drawing. None of these were on offer at the school, or they were part of the curriculum but very little time was dedicated to them. The Cypriot model at the time, late 1990s and early 2000s, promoted hard core academic rigour, rather than ‘soft’ subjects. In contrast, St Aber’s offered all kinds of extra-curricular activities. The pupils could, and were encouraged to, explore different activities. This was somewhat curtailed when they started GCSEs and A Levels but even then, the school believed a balance could be reached. Promoting extra-curricular activities was a central at St Aber’s. As I will discuss later they were very important because they built character, and fitted with the idea of creating well-rounded individuals. This is why at St Aber’s they were called co-curricular, in order to emphasise their prominence alongside the core syllabus.

Mr Jones, who I believe complemented the business-like mind of the Headmaster when it came to the direction of the school, noted that the school had been doing very well. Before Mr Anderson started they had a surplus in the tens of thousands. Now they were in the millions. Therefore, they could offer a wider variety of experiences to the students and invest in the co-curricular activities or new facilities at the school. The abundance of money also showed in the cohort of the pupils; the houses these pupils lived in cost hundreds of thousands or millions of pounds. Their parents were first-generation middle-class, as one participant described, so they had ‘new money’. They were technologically and socially savvy parents, keen to ensure good education for their children but above all, ensure their mental and physical well-being. This is why the school did not, in essence, brand itself as an academic hothouse, as they were targeting a different demographic: parents and pupils for whom Oxbridge

and top scores were welcome but not vital, not at the expense of their social life or well-being.

The area where the school was located is very liberal, as mentioned countless of times by the participants. I believed this was partially reflected in the General Election of 2017, with a surprising swing to a Labour MP, who opposed a 'hard Brexit' and promised to reverse cuts in schools in the area. However, this liberalism and openness did not involve a great mix and diversity, neither in class and socioeconomic terms nor in ethnicity. House prices almost entirely excluded poorer people altogether, and there was very little social housing in close proximity to the school. The mix of European bankers, managers and consultants in the area meant that people had learnt to live with a globalised outlook and integration; however, I would argue that this was the kind of integration which allowed inclusion of people 'like us'.

St Aber's managed to become a favourite amongst parents in the area both despite and because of the white middle-class homogeneity it represented, because parents needed to feel they were securing a welcoming nature for their children. There were some good Catholic schools in the area, but apart from the children of French and Spanish bankers, not many English families were practising Catholics. The options, therefore, could be limited, and the competition for places was described as fierce. The only outstanding school was highly selective and there were no grammar schools near the area. Therefore, private education became the most viable option for a lot of the families in Mawerley. Options, choice, and competition can be words at the centre of a lot of parental discussions. The decision to attend a private school was the springboard where broader questions of inclusion and tolerance, whiteness and race, valued and devalued social practices were formed and allowed for understandings of wider social practices.

More broadly, this study is about how the discourse of neoliberalism and creating the circumstances for individuals' success through accumulating human capital, affects the everyday conceptions of the pupils. The practices of the school, from the focus on sports and other co-curricular activities, the almost all-white cohort, to the steady progression of the academic results, shape the everydayness of the pupils, which they translate into opinions and beliefs. This will be studied by examining how participant decisions and opinions did not revolve solely around the school ethos but more broadly through the encompassing character of the totality which involved normative practices attributed to their social circle, the locality and the familial background.

St Aber's and Mawerley: the construction of a total locality

Setting off on an in-depth exploration of St Aber's, it soon became apparent that the school was mirroring the wider locality. Walking to the school, it was easy to distinguish St Aber's pupils: they had an air about them. It was not only the fact they were white, they also seemed very well-kept and confident. Almost as if they were on the way to the City for another day at the office, their manner almost adult-like, especially among the older pupils. Drawing from Goffman's *Asylums*, the combination of St Aber's and Mawerley resembled a total institution, where normative practices transcended the school and were being reflected in the locality. Goffman (1961) defined such institutions which had the power to shape individuals:

A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life (Goffman 1961: 11).

Their function was detailed as follows:

When we review the different institutions in our Western society, we find that some are encompassing to a degree discontinuously greater

than the ones next in line. Their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors. These establishments I am calling total institutions (Goffman 1961: 4).

Similar to Goffman, St Aber's and Mawerley seemed to perform an analogous function. The encompassing character which was enacted within the total institutions proposed by Goffman were imagined as total localities. The geographical location which the institution occupied moved beyond the confines of the school. It was both spatialities where 'like-situated individuals reside' and where certain elements act as barriers to those who do not belong to the establishment. Whereas Goffman primarily described how the inmates are not allowed social interaction with those in the outside world, it can also be argued that there is a tendency for total localities to exclude those who are not part of them. Extending this, social practices are not only limited to an institutional setting but can encompass social areas and neighbourhoods in their entirety. Spatial separation is not only achieved through physical barriers but can at times be manifested through separation via class, race, and gender. This is possible by not allowing people to enter certain spaces but also by making them feel unwelcome in these places, or out of place. As Gittins (1998) mentions, spaces at the Severalls Hospital, in Goffman's study, were separated by one central corridor but there was a further division between the overcrowded wards on the one side, and those comfortable rooms wealthier patients could afford. Classifications appear to happen in all aspects of life and as the case of the hospital above shows it is those who can afford it that can occupy certain spaces. Moreover, as Goffman argued such institutional practices have great moral implications, as their encompassing tendencies can redefine the whole self of individuals. These practices interacted and reinforced socially privileged positions. This project therefore attempts 'to demonstrate how the self was

socially shaped and re-shaped by patterns of interaction, which may be crystallised in the rules and practices of institutional settings' (Scott, 2011: 8). In the words of Goffman then:

The self, then, can be seen as something that resides in the arrangements prevailing in a social system for its members. The self in this sense is not a property of the person to whom it is attributed, but dwells rather in the pattern of social control that is exerted in connexion with the person by himself and those around him. This special kind of institutional arrangement does not so much support the self as constitute it (1961: 154).

Educating for success

The pupils at St Aber's epitomised neoliberal education and the attributes that the tectonic shift of neoliberalism has triggered across all sectors. As Robertson (2007) describes 'schools and universities are now universally mandated to (efficiently and effectively) create the new breed of entrepreneurs and innovators; the value-driven minds who will spearhead the battle for global markets and consumers'. This type of education requires human betterment in the form of human capital. As Foucault described:

What does it mean to form human capital, and so to form these kinds of abilities-machines which will produce income, which will be remunerated by income? It means, of course, making what are called educational investments (2008: 229).

Those who can afford to pay for their education are more likely to have an advantage in their academic and professional life as they manage to advance and potentially capitalise on their human and other forms of capital, such as social

and cultural. They are able to invest in human capital and make themselves marketable, largely through educational investments. Foucault's ideas can be applied to what we now term neoliberalism in the sense that they can encompass market policies, while the principles of competition have extended to all aspects of social and cultural life (Gane 2012). Therefore, parents strive to ensure that they take steps to equip their children with enough social and economic capital to compete in the world market; and schools with enough resources provide for these needs. Foucault's analysis of the Homo Economicus, the person who is able to be an entrepreneur of themselves underpins this study. For Foucault, then, we could say that labour can be equated with the ability to sell oneself as a commodity. Since this commodity has a limited time that it can produce labour in exchange for income, adequate provisions needed to be made to ensure that the economic gains would be maximised. The idea of educational investment is central to his argument. Interestingly, this might not only entail the time spent in school. It has the potential to also involve the time parents devote to their children; rendering it possible to quantify the possibilities of success based on parental involvement in a child's upbringing. Although Foucault's analysis focuses on the different resources invested by the West (in comparison to Third World countries, as he calls them) in educational policies, the point made is prominent not only in relation to economic developments but also physical and psychological elements which allow for investments in human capital. This is important because the participants in the study aptly showcased this tendency. Investments were made both through schooling but also psychological investment of parents in their children's lives and by equipping their children with abilities such as grit. Human capital therefore, as Foucault noted, cannot solely be accumulated through formal schooling experience; it is through after-school activities, through parental involvement, through mentally stimulating activities, for example, reading the paper during breakfast, encouraging current affairs awareness, and so on.

Apart from the analysis of human capital, the concept of Homo

Economicus is equally prominent as a theory. In Foucault's words: 'Homo economicus is someone who pursues his own interest [...] From the point of view of a theory of government, homo economicus is the person who must be left alone. With regard to homo economicus, one must laissez-faire; he is the subject or object of laissez-faire. [...] someone who is eminently governable' (2008).

Foucault's predictions 30 years ago still echo in how schooling and education are viewed nowadays: 'schools and universities have arguably been reconfigured to produce the highly individualised, responsibilised subjects who have become [economic entrepreneurs] across all dimensions of their lives' (Davies & Bansel 2007: 248). The participants in this project acquired traits which made them responsible individuals, while they were learning to position themselves vis-à-vis the Other.

Studying the middle-classes

In Willis' (1977) seminal work on working class boys learning to labour, he studied working class boys and their notions of resistance, which ultimately, meant that education hindered them from breaking out of their class boundaries, while not allowing the social hierarchy to be challenged. In this respect, education can be seen as a troubling means in perpetuating inequalities rather than overcoming them. The boys in Willis' book learnt to labour, in a way that through education they were prepared for working class jobs, not explicitly, but through everyday practices. The pupils at St Aber's were learning to labour in a rather different way: they were preparing for middle class endeavours: gap years, university, professions which they chose based on their interests rather than necessity, while the practices they engaged with both at school and in their free time implicitly prepared them for a middle-class existence. Similar to Willis, this study is also interested in the cultural. Willis describes the cultural not

simply as a set of transferred internal structures (as in the usual notions of socialisation) nor as the passive result of the action of dominant ideology downwards (as in certain kinds of Marxism) but at least in part as the product of collective human praxis (ibid.: 4).

As will be shown throughout this study, culture is not something which exists irrespective of what we value or perceive as 'normal'. Rather, it shapes ideas and opinions which are reflected in how people behave. Culture is also interlinked with class and race. Therefore, class hierarchies and values define the future of these pupils and permeate everyday experiences.

Politicians across the partisan spectrum have historically used education as a platform to advance social mobility and minimise class differences. For example, David Blunkett, Education Secretary under the Blair government from 1997 to 2001, outlined a belief that in order for education to promote individual advancement education reforms are not enough. He stressed how parental attitudes needed to change. In particular, parents needed to develop a culture of achievement and re-socialisation. Although New Labour did not use class in their vision, Blunkett's views were directed to the working classes; they should become more middle-class if they wanted their children to succeed, if schooling was to work (Gerwitz 2001). Cameron and the Coalition government, from 2010 to 2015, extended the Labour initiative of academies, with a neoliberal agenda, where the state abolished a lot of their responsibility and education was seen through individual ability (Toynbee & Walker 2015). Those who could benefit from that were those who could afford to privately tutor their children and perhaps secure a place in a grammar school or other selective schools. Another obstacle to the working classes was when the Coalition government raised undergraduate university fees to £9000 per year. Even though numbers going to study in HE have evidently increased, the debt accumulated can be discouraging for those who come from less well-off backgrounds. Cameron promoted the rhetoric of a Big Society, a bigger better society where the power would not be

in Whitehall but with the man and woman in the streets (Watt 2010). This involved spending cuts and as an extension, promoted individual responsibility. Prime Minister (since 2016) Theresa May's vision, for boosting education was through her pledge to build more grammar schools. After the snap election in June 2017, this pledge would most likely be abandoned; however, her vision to make Britain the most meritocratic society relies heavily on education. She believes that opportunities are given through talent and not through privilege; something that should start in school (May 2016; May 2017). Although class is never mentioned in the rhetoric of men and women in the street, class is what creates the differences between those high aspiring parents and hard-working children and those who are, in their majority, less aspirational, according to politicians. However, what are the attributes that these middle-class families present, which set them apart? How do these practices and the context within which they operate affect their beliefs and decision-making processes? What elements acquire value in their everyday understandings and how banal practices form into capital? If these middle-class values are something to be looked upon, then this study aims to discuss what these values are and how they come to be formed, while in the process marginalising differing values.

There are many studies which examine those who are left behind and being failed by the system (for example, the body of work by Louise Archer, Gill Crozier, Diane Reay). And there is a plethora of studies which look at the super-rich and privileged (for example, the body of work of Claire Maxwell, Peter Aggleton, Shamus Khan), but not enough studies of the middle-classes. Although, admittedly, these pupils are almost as privileged as those who go to elite private and boarding schools, it can also be argued that they do not come from families which are used to private education or have always had money. These are not upper-class elites, nor families with endless disposable income. They are families that make good money but they have to work hard, and oftentimes come from traditional working-class backgrounds.

Although this study does not claim to represent the middle classes in their entirety, which in reality is probably the widest group of people in British society, it aims to show how this school and the parents interact with the wider society and how opinions and ideas are formed through the various practices of the school and the parents. Therefore, conclusions are only drawn for this particular school and this cohort of participants as they shared their everydayness and views over the period of ten months.

At this point it might be worthwhile noting a few caveats. Throughout this thesis, the views of pupils, staff and those involved in the wider life of the school are reported and although my interpretations are given, I have tried to give the story and the voice of the participants as much as possible; however, at times my interpretations might have been wrong, as the nature of qualitative work can be subjective. Although certain people dominate the pages of this study, all the people who took part provided me with great insights into the nature of this context, even if their words were not printed in this thesis. Another caveat is that a lot can be said about how the pedagogy of educational institutions affects the academic progress of pupils; however, my thesis does not aim to look whether these pedagogies are good or bad. In this sense, although the whole study is preoccupied with a school it is not an educational study. I examine what happened in class but I do not have much to say about the actual techniques the various teachers used in their classes. Although I asked students whether they were happy with the way the classes were taught I do not think this is an important element of how I analysed their experiences. I was more concerned with the everydayness of the school and the local area.

More specifically, I would argue that the total locality I studied stopped certain people's presence from being allowed as certain bodies and behaviours were not always desirable or valued. Such white spaces impede inclusion of those who are not 'fit', either because of their class or because of their skin. As Yancy described it:

White classrooms convey White territoriality. It is as if one has entered a neighbourhood governed and controlled by a White covenant that bespeaks your desired absence. Within this space, it feels as if one's presence is being policed as stoppable; where the social skin of the classroom does not call out to you with dialectical smoothness—that is, where you don't move within that space in such a way that it claims you as desirable, as someone “fit” *to be* in that space (2014:3).

Pease (2010) has called for more emphasis to be given to privilege and social inequalities at the intersections of class, race and gender among those that nature or society afforded them more opportunities. This study has aimed to do that by examining practices and localities which countenance white hegemony and create bubbles of entitled belonging. Below I provide an outline of the chapters which will follow, with a brief description of how the themes I discussed above are included in each chapter.

Outline of chapters

Chapter Two will look at some of the key literature on the themes which will be discussed later. Even though I have highlighted some broader theoretical frameworks which underpin this study, ie. the idea that spatial totality and the neoliberal educational paradigm are the key determinants in how St Aber's and Mawerley have come to shape positions and beliefs, this chapter will look at literatures I drew upon for my empirical work. Initially, there is work which examines the notion of space as a form of power and how certain practices create pockets where people choose to reside. Throughout the chapters I describe St Aber's and Mawerley as a bubble, here I aim to discuss a body of work which looks at how or why these bubbles might be created. One of the main points

which will be raised is that the white bubble which the total locality of the study has formed corresponds to ideas of images of the idyllic white English countryside. This representation then poses questions of nationhood and who belongs Here. Therefore, I will look at the literature which looks at the significance of words such as British, English and belonging. As notions of belonging can be associated with race and/or class, the chapter then looks at work which analyses how boundaries can be created through racialized and classed acts. Lastly, there is an overview of works which look at privilege as a contested term under the guise of equal opportunity and tolerance.

Chapter Three will discuss the ethnographic processes which were used in this project. I discuss the difficulties in gaining access for my fieldwork and how the project has ultimately changed over the period of the last 3 years. I will then outline how I collected data and what decisions I had to take with regards to including data in this thesis. I will problematize my own positionality as a researcher and what dilemmas I faced while being in the field. I will examine both my own identity as a white middle-class researcher in a white and middle-class field and the interpretations I have given to the data. I will conclude the chapter by attributing value to the everyday occurrences and seemingly trivial acts as a unit of analysis.

Chapter Four will analyse the attempts of the school to market itself as a place where individual potential is nurtured, and well-roundedness is valued more than academic results. I will argue that attempts to put the co-curricular at the core of what the school represents, ultimately, positions the school as a neoliberal institution. I will provide an in-depth description of the school and some of its practices as identified by staff and pupils. The chapter will analyse empirical data which discusses the connection between the changes in the physical space surrounding the school and how they have impacted on the school. It will hypothesise that this white bubble encompasses everyday decisions, both as to

whether this privileged education is what liberal individuals want and whether privilege in itself is a notion which should be contested.

Chapter Five will look at the introduction of the teaching of British Values at St Aber's. The chapter will argue that British Values in themselves can potentially create boundaries amongst different groups and alienate individuals, rather than achieve integration. Both staff and pupils problematize the nuances of British Values as a term. This will also include discussions of who can be considered British and as belonging to the nation, and will discuss tolerance of the Other and what practices can be tolerated and be seen as having value vis-à-vis normative practices which are, perhaps misleadingly, considered British. The chapter will look in some detail at sport as a contributing factor to one's Britishness or Englishness, as sport has been a recurring theme in the data, being placed at the forefront of national belonging and classed divisions.

Chapter Six will discuss race as a social and cultural construct within the white bubble of St Aber's and Mawerley. The chapter will argue that the concept of tolerance in relation to the Other can become exclusionary, if whiteness is not acknowledged as normative and powerful. I will give examples from the narratives of the few ethnic Other pupils and how they view their difference within the school. I will argue that integration has not been achieved within the context I studied, since cultural practices associated with racialized difference, are oftentimes seen as of less value compared to white normative practices.

Chapter Seven will discuss classed divisions, which I will argue are even more prominent than raced ones. Everyday practices in a middle-class spatiality act as examples of how class can become normative and its enactment not only excludes but also devalues people and actions. With references to how women, in particular, can be pathologised because of their working-class practices, class becomes gendered and it attributes less value to lifestyle choices. I will provide

examples of how the wider locality is structured, such as buildings, spaces for lifestyle consumption, or even food choices.

Chapter Eight will conclude by summarising the main themes which emerged throughout the thesis. I briefly describe how the total locale of St Aber's and Mawerley has come to exist in its current form and what potential the future might be. Although I do not claim to make any generalised statements throughout the thesis, in the conclusion I point to some themes I raised which I believe might broaden the dialogue on how such total locales might change their current function.

Chapter Two

Creating Classed, Raced, and Ethnic Localities

Throughout this thesis, there is an emerging theme which points to St Aber's being a kind of 'white bubble'. Even though I would argue this is a classed bubble as well, I am borrowing the phrase which was used liberally at the school. Within this bubble it is argued that the intersectionality of race, class, gender and nationality acquire complex and contested meanings and are understood through the lens of individual agency but formed through social and parental considerations. What this chapter examines is the literature which has discussed

the issues covered in the following chapters. It discusses in more detail how exclusive neighbourhoods are formed, both through gentrification processes and the erection of inclusive/exclusive boundaries which conform primarily to cultural practices. Othering within these total localities happens both through macro processes, for example, school choices, but also in unassuming spaces, such as a bus stop. The discussion, then, focuses on the historical narratives associated with the total locales, which can be traced back to the ideal of the white English countryside, which is almost replicated in total locales within cosmopolitan London. This idyllic landscape, however, needs to be composed by those who are allowed in. Therefore, the chapter looks at the literature around who is considered British and English and the significance of these terms. Moreover, there is examination of the nuances of inclusion and exclusion based on racialized and classed understandings. Parental involvement as an active tool in class reproduction and/or entrenching valorised practices is discussed, especially with relation to school choice, a choice which is seen as going against their liberal values.

On exclusive neighbourhoods

School choice can be a practice which increases social segregation, since private schools tend to follow the market rules and have become largely driven by a supply and demand mentality, which means they act as a business, while parents act as consumers, trying to optimise their social and labour market opportunities (Ball & Nikita 2014). Through these processes certain areas can become hubs for those who can afford to choose their schools, disrupting the dynamics of inner city neighbourhoods (Greener & Powell 2009; Reay & Ball 1998; Rowe 2017; McGhie & Mendick 2014 [for statistics on house prices based on school in the area] among others).

Atkinson & Bridge suggest that:

those who come to occupy prestigious central city locations frequently have the characteristics of a colonial elite. They often live in exclusive residential enclaves and are supported by a domestic and local service class. They have 'new class' occupations, and are marked out by their cosmopolitanism (2005: 3).

Crucially, Atkinson & Bridge point out that it needs to be acknowledged that:

neighbourhood scales may be an important locus of concentrations of professionals and managerial groups in networks of dialogue and co-ordination of state and substate governance structures. In short, the neighbourhood has been under-recognised as the site of the reproduction of a wider set of power relations and contacts which operate at local, urban, regional, and international levels (ibid.: 7).

The authors describe the enclaves where these middle-class elites reside as 'city-states', as they have little contact with neighbouring places. It is these neighbourhoods that this study aims to explore as a site of power and privilege formation, exclusion of the Other; and, rather ironically, adopting discourses of tolerance and diversity. It is in these micro city-states, or total locales, where understandings of class, race, gender, and one's privilege are lived, become part of one's habitus and are perpetuated from parents, within schools and are contested (or not) by young people who see themselves as more open-minded and welcoming than past generations.

One of the ways that such boundaries are erected is through gentrification, which is defined by Ruth Glass as:

One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes, upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages -two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. [...] The current social status and

value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district, it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced, and the whole social character of the district is changed (1964: xviii–xix).

Similarly, Lees et al. (2008: xv) describe gentrification as 'the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of the central city into middle-class residential and/or for commercial use'. Notably, they place a more precise emphasis on the central city; with professionals aiming to acquire property in places with good transport links to the City or Canary Wharf, for example. The term carries strong political implications as it implies class displacement, and the wrongful implications that the working classes will benefit from a trickle-down effect from this revitalisation of poor areas. However, as Lees et al. (ibid.) suggest this mostly remains on a hypothetical level, as the benefits are reaped by those with the economic capital. Often, the demographics of such areas change entirely rather than promote an equal distribution of social groups. Gentrification, then, can also be described as a process of 'class restructuring which is spatially articulated at the local level [...] that creates space for the progressively more affluent user' (Paton 2014: 3). Gentrification is an interesting hegemonic project as it allows individuals to collect capital through accumulation of space (ibid.). Therefore, individuals can acquire positions of power through their ability to occupy certain spaces, and displace others in the name of revitalising poor areas, while displacing Others both physically and culturally. This is another form of power and control; the residents have the power to stay in the area or move, and control of one's residence becomes a class indicator (ibid.). The same cannot be suggested for poorer residents who are either asked to move out (through regeneration projects) or because they are priced out. Exclusionary practices, therefore, occur through simple everyday but powerful acts, such as housing.

Space, as Elden & Crampton (2007) argue, moves beyond the territory it occupies and becomes a symbol of power and governmentality. Foucault (2006) talked about power which needs to be looked at through its geographical specificity, as power can be enacted through sites of healthiness, for example, or by looking at birth and death rates in particular places (Foucault 2004). Massey (2009) wrote about the potential of space to invoke power. Notably, Massey writes that ‘There are places where power is concentrated and this can be in big metropolitan cities, such as London. There are also the pockets within urban areas which people might find difficult to enter as these spaces require certain characteristics for those who are given entry’ (ibid.: 21). Massey has described elsewhere how place can be a word for exclusion of difference:

In the context of a world which is, indeed, increasingly interconnected the notion of place (usually evoked as ‘local place’) has come to have totemic resonance. Its symbolic value is endlessly mobilised in political argument. For some it is the sphere of the everyday, of real and valued practices, the geographical source of meaning, vital to hold on to as ‘the global’ spins its ever more powerful and alienating webs [...] a protective pulling-up of drawbridges and a building of walls against the new invasions (2005: 5).

Moran (2005) describes Othering happening in unassuming spaces, such as bus stops; Othering ensuing through simple acts rather than ostentatious gestures. Jean-Paul Sartre (in Moran *ibid.*) gives the example of people queueing at a bus stop, which becomes a symbol of uniting different people within the same experience, and forces them to compete for the scarce resources which are on offer; in this instance, bus seats. This is a simplistic example but Sartre believes that it represents the wider competitive quest for limited resources. Moran (*ibid.*) argues that we can use these everyday occurrences to examine how people’s choices throughout their everyday lives reflect their social positioning.

Erecting social, racial, and classed boundaries

In 1968, former MP Enoch Powell gave a speech in which he criticised Commonwealth immigration and the proposed Race Relations Bill. The speech became known as the 'Rivers of Blood speech'. In the speech, Powell referred to the worries of what he described as ordinary Englishmen and women who were feeling inundated by the amount of people coming to live in Britain. The transformation facing the various neighbourhoods and the black faces who started appearing in the all-white neighbourhoods worried people who had lived there all their lives. Ware (1995) describes in *The Old People of Lambeth* pamphlet, which was produced in 1979, where interviews were quoted by elderly white men and women who felt that their quality of life has deteriorated since blacks had been allowed to come and stay in Britain. While some areas saw peaceful coexistence among the various groups, Ware (ibid.) describes how at times there was upheaval since integration of the newly arrived groups was rather challenging. Political rhetoric of integration has once again come to the fore, with Muslim communities being primarily targeted, especially with the terrorist attacks in 2017, both in Manchester and London, and before that with the compulsory teaching of British Values in schools. Kundani (2007) described this as integrationism which draws on a wider anti-Muslim political culture and is often associated with the war on terror.

Apart from the divisions which result from racial and ethnic differences there are other divisions; namely those consequential of income inequalities, primarily in London. There are those who live in affluent, often gentrified areas, and those who live in the margins of the city or poorer areas (Butler & Watt 2007), something which Hamnett (2003) calls social polarisation. The middle-classes are often best positioned to choose their postcode. Admittedly, proximity to work has become extremely important for a lot of the people who decide to put their roots in an inner London neighbourhood; however, social status remains

central to their everydayness and a coveted postcode or a house near a desirable school are markers of social status. Their social position, therefore, can be maintained through consumption and one of the main manifestations of this can be the consumption of place, through housing, or education. This practice, however, can polarise the city and create urban tensions (Butler & Watt 2007). As Butler and Watt (ibid.) argue these polarisations and exclusionary areas have rendered gauging the internal dynamics of areas increasingly difficult, as the divisions become starker and the interactions between the different social groups become more arduous, rarer and more challenging.

Rose suggests that a transformation of the economic life, mainly by governmental changes, has led to a mutation in arrangements of how people conduct themselves. This has meant:

a re-coding of dividing practices, revising the distinctions between the affiliated and the marginalised. By the affiliated I mean those who are considered 'included': the individuals and families who have the financial, educational and moral means to 'pass' in their role as active citizens in responsible communities. To remain affiliated one must 'enterprise' one's life through active voice, within authoritative terms and limits that have become integrated within all the practices of everyday life, sustained by a heterogeneous array of 'civilised' images and devices for lifestyle promotion (1996:340).

Therefore, despite cohabitation in neighbouring areas there are dissimilarities on how groups of people view other groups who occupy adjacent spaces. As a result, as Ahmed (2008) suggests for communities to be happy there is the requirement of similarity. It is claimed that communities need to be similar in order to trust each other and be happy, as diversity can create tensions. It is not simply diversity which brings unhappiness, but the difficulty of people from

dissimilar backgrounds to communicate, since they lack common interests and a shared 'language' (ibid.). For diversity to become happy, it involves loyalty to what has already been ascribed with an idealised view of the nation. Happiness is promised as a return for those who show allegiance to the nation, and they are allowed to 'give' diversity to the nation through adhering by the rules already in place (ibid.: 122).

This coveted similarity is not always framed as such. All-white spaces are not always seen to be all-white, white people who occupy white spaces do not see their neighbourhoods as racialized; despite coming into contact with people from other races or ethnicities only rarely and tend to be immersed into spaces which mirror them. As Amico (2017) suggests because the segregation is so complete, the spaces occupied are not perceived as racialized and as such they look 'normal'; whites become 'fish in water that can't recognise the wetness all around us' (ibid.: 22). Not being able to see the obvious, continues Amico, means that whites do not see any race problems and as such they become a thing of the past; therefore, with racism being a thing of the past white privilege is also fiction.

It can be argued that people do not always join the groups they are expected of them consciously. It is through social situations and particular locations where attitudes are enacted. Oftentimes this is through the different forms of capital which people possess. To understand manifestations of cultural capital, I borrow from Lareau (2003) and her interpretation of cultural capital as ways of behaving; the fact that middle-class parents are more effective in instilling in their children ways of behaviour which can positively help them in their academic development and affect their social demeanour. Social capital, in the form of networks and contacts, and economic capital, the financial advantages enjoyed by some, are all deployed and as a result, act as structural barriers to classed and raced mixing.

As Isin (2002: 24) suggests ‘there are certain situations where individuals are forced, coerced, compelled, cajoled, or ensnared into group identifications, however weak and unimportant to them may be their initial affiliation’. This might make the group become virtuous, righteous and superior to other groups (which ultimately lack some attributes they possess). Therefore, it can be suggested that white valorisation and normativity does not always happen within the consciousness of those who enact it. Isin (ibid.) continues that the key strategy for dominant groups to assert their position is to almost conceal the social power they possess. The various rituals, rules and norms which they follow are necessary for their reproduction and growth but usually they are enacted through institutions (education being one of the most prominent ones); however, it is fixed spatiality which is a pivotal point for social relationships to emerge and form the groupings. Additionally, according to Tyler (2012), class and ethnic identities frame who it is that individuals feel comfortable and at ease with, and who they choose to be their friends.

Atkinson (2006) suggests that segregation is because of a need for homogeneity, the idea that being with those you are similar with ensures predictability, which can lead to safety. In the city, this is predicated on the construction of enclave-like developments, which can ensure middle-class solidarity and relative withdrawal. This is also suggested by Vincent, Neal & Iqbal (2017: 4) who found that ‘white middle classes, despite their stated intentions and appreciation of their diverse localities, tend to experience difference by drifting towards forms of ‘cocooning’ which limit the degree of active ‘living together’.

The idyllic English countryside

Constructing an ‘ideal’ neighbourhood might allude to ideals which connect to the ‘ideal’ past. Neal (2002: 443) maintains that there has always been a certain nostalgia associated with the English countryside: ‘Pastoral images of England

– rolling green fields, winding lanes, cream teas, chocolate box villages – have, historically and contemporarily, provided the corner-stones of a specific national identity’, something which resonates with Kumar’s (2000) description of what is quintessentially English. This can be seen both through structural differences in the political and class system, as maintained through the countryside and through the connections ‘between the countryside, nation and racialisation [which] have had a particular longevity’ (ibid.: 444). During colonialism, it was this pastoralism which constructed the English nation, while post-colonialism has allowed for an (invisible) whiteness to construct the national identity (ibid.). Even though urban landscapes differ greatly from this quintessential image of Englishness, it could be argued that most public schools still maintain this image, not through their cohort but with the grand buildings which oftentimes resemble the country house, with the great fields dedicated to sport and the traditions around lunch and dinner; all resembling a more idyllic landscape compared to the urban architecture characterising some schools. This ‘white landscape’ and the invisibility of whiteness (ibid.) is what describes St Aber’s; despite being amid a multicultural city, the way the everydayness is constructed is seen through a lens which resembles this idea of England.

The idyllic rurality of Britain as a signifier of national belonging and culture are also discussed by Neal and Agyeman (2006) as ways for inclusion and exclusion. The English narrative adopts the rural as a way to signify those who are included in the national discourse, namely whites, not so much by naming them as those who belong here; but mostly through not mentioning certain types of people who are not seen/ do not belong (the Ethnic Other). Colls (2002) echoes this by pointing that national identity is often linked to sense of belonging, which in Britain is seen through natural England; a relationship which went through a historical crisis through the Industrial Revolution, but has since remained a strong point of identification. Moreover, the fact that England is separated from the Continent through the long stretch of water encouraged a distinction from foreigners and a sense of security, most notably seen through

avoiding some of the war atrocities which Europe experienced (Blake, 1982).

Tyler (2006: 129) discusses the safety of the rural, 'a crime-free zone and a 'retreat' away from what is perceived to be the 'malaise' in English cities often associated with Asian and black settlement'. It has been the white, middle classes who mostly seem to belong to this pastoral context.

In contrast, urban contexts can feel threatening, unlike the 'white safety' that the rural symbolises (Neal, 2002). Solomos and Back (1995) describe how the urban, with its multi-ethnic Other, can be the symbol of unrest. They provide the example of a cartoon published in a newspaper at the time of the riots in the 1980s, where urban Black youth had words written on their chests, emblematic of the threats to the safety of the city: 'unemployment, drugs, crime, poor housing, racial tension' (ibid.: 83). As the authors argue this cartoon sums up how 'whiteness as a discourse is manifest within urban environments, acting as an illuminating presence that we cannot see, while determining what is made visible'(ibid.). Therefore, it can be concluded that whiteness and Englishness have acquired, historically, a tacit yet racialized nature, which excludes the Other.

Kumar (2001) observes that Englishness has always embodied the aspirations, values, and images of the middle and upper classes; their sports, their manners, their education, their politics. They came to form a national character which in many ways represented what they considered as of value and therefore, tended to exclude those who appear not to fit into these white normative values. This, it can be argued, partly stems from a lack of what this white Englishness might involve. The crisis facing Great Britain, very aptly manifested by the forced introduction of British Values in schools and the implying fact that the large numbers of incoming migrants (especially after the end of the Empire) and in more recent years, with economic migration from various EU countries and those seeking asylum, is partly a problem of England. As Crick (1995) discusses more than twenty years ago, Englishness and more recently, Britishness need to

be defined in more clear terms and not only to provide legal institutional frameworks or political allegiances. This can provide a less abstract definition of who belongs and can be deemed as legitimate in the country.

Apple provides a different explanation on how the known becomes safer, through the discourses of postcolonial loss. There is often as Apple writes an

unarticulated sense of loss, a feeling that things are out of control, an anomic feeling that is connected to a sense of loss of one's 'rightful place' in the world (an 'empire' either now in decline or under threat), and a fear of the culture and body of 'the other'. The private is the sphere of smooth running and efficient organisations, of autonomy and individual choice. The 'public' is out of control, messy, heterogeneous (2004: 79).

However, apart from the ethnic Other, there is exclusion of those who are white but do not have the same values and 'aspirations' with the white middle-classes, namely the working-class Other. Neoliberal and class-based interests constitute the white working-classes as a 'culturally burdensome whiteness' and frame them symbols of backwardness, as opposed to Britain which is deemed a highly aspirational and modern nation (Haylett 2000: 351).

The boundaries of British and English nationalisms

Discussing white safety and who can be deemed English or British requires clarification of what these terms mean. Historically, the English have found it difficult to engage with their Englishness, mainly because there are more than one constructions of England to engage with: Anglo-British England, Little England, English England and Cosmopolitan England (Bryant, 2003). Bryant

(ibid.: 398) continues that the English have found it easier to identify with the Britishness and in the process 'have denied themselves many of the signs of Englishness one might otherwise have expected. Very many firms, state organisations and voluntary associations have been called British, national or, [...] royal'. Kumar (2000) gives a detailed description as to why the English have always suffered with their national identity. As he points out the English have always remained an enigma, both to themselves and the outsiders. 'One of the reasons for the fog that surrounds this question is the persistent denial that there is such thing as 'English nationalism'. *Other* nations have nationalism; the English, it has been conventional to say, have patriotism' (ibid.: 576). However, Kumar suggests that the very denial of English nationalism, speaks of its actual existence. Despite the English congratulating themselves for not being afflicted by this terrible pathology, it can be argued that they have what Kumar describes as 'imperial nationalism'; which carries the stamp of the imperial past even when the empire has gone. A reason for this, claims Kumar, is that:

The English, as the wealthiest, most numerous, and most powerful group within the United Kingdom, were aware of the need to restrain their claims and to mute assertions of ethnic identity, among themselves no less than among other ethnicities in the Kingdom. [...] If you are clearly in charge, you do not need to beat the drum or blow the bugle too loudly. To do so in fact would be to threaten the very basis of that commanding position, by reminding other groups of their inferiority and perhaps provoking them to do something about it.' (ibid.: 589-90).

McCrone (2002: 313) echoes that by saying that the idea of being English is 'something which is often assumed and rarely discussed as 'there is the fear that if it is highlighted too much it might disrupt the fragile balance between the

different territories in the area’.

Linda Colley in her seminal work on the British (2003) suggests that the British forged a nation above all by war with the French. She argues that Britons from Wales, Scotland or England had to unite themselves collectively against the hostile Other; having Protestantism at the epicentre of their identity. This collective identity has a contingent character, based on social and territorial boundaries. Therefore, this distinction from the Other was also against the colonial people they conquered, those people ‘manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour (Colley, 2003: 5). Colley concludes that people decide who they are by reference to who they are not: ‘This was how it was with the British after 1707. They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores’ (ibid.: 6). Colley very accurately predicted how difficult the British have found being associated with the federal nature of the European Union, and as such, distinct identifications with the English, Welsh, Scottish or Irish would ensure; something which has been observed with the vote for leaving the EU and the subsequent discussions of devolution. Colls (2002) extends this argument by saying that avoiding big land wars, the invincibility of the navy and the minor regards for race claims of Celts, gave the English a sense of a composite Anglo-Saxon identity, primarily identified by whiteness.

The significance of the terms ‘British’ and ‘English’ have also been highly contested. As Tyler (2012: 99) suggests ‘This slippage in language between ‘English’ to describe food produced in the countryside, and ‘British’ mobilised to signify the national appeal of curry, illustrates the racially inclusive constitution of the idea of Britishness within English vernacular – but the racially exclusive, bounded and Whiteness constitution of Englishness’. As Sherwood (2013) discusses divisions of Britishness/Englishness hold everlasting interest and debate. For example, the 2012 London Olympics raised the question of ‘plastic’ Britishness, for those not born in the country. However, as Sherwood notes the indistinct definitions of the two words start from a long time ago.

‘Englishness was a nineteenth-century term and a continuing nineteenth-century concern. [...] many [commentators] emulate Nassau Senior by ‘using the word England as a concise appellation for the nation inhabiting the British islands’ (ibid.: 4). It was during the times of the British Empire where the national identity had come to be formed vis-à-vis the Imperial Other. It was, at the time, part of the national identity to be considered a coloniser (ibid.). Even though such identifications are not used in the national rhetoric, it can be argued that they play a role in how they shape ideas of nationhood: both through attempts to distance the national identity of the atrocities which can be associated with colonisers but also with attempts to establish a different identity after decades of such an identification. With the expansion of the Empire over a fifth of the world, it was London (in England) which was the epicentre of this vast landscape, which probably led to Englishness being used almost interchangeably with Britishness. Sherwood continues that the current debate on Englishness probably began with the essays on the English written by George Orwell, around the time of the Second World War, such as *England, your England* and *The Lion and Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius*. These discussions carried on to the 1980s and 1990s with the ‘apparently relentless globalizing, Americanizing or Europeanizing forces’ (Mandler in Sherwood ibid.: 5).

As Condor et al. (2006: 125) suggest ‘The construct of Britishness, whether in its imperial or domestic guise, has long been associated with celebratory accounts of British ‘unity in diversity’, which was treated as morally and politically superior to the cultural or racial essentialisms understood to characterize ‘Continental’ forms of nationalism’. Clark comments on the positive aspects of this fluidity, since the pattern of identification in the British Isles showcased the

resilience of a diverse and plural system of identities, rather than the rigidity but final shattering of a unitary one. This produced a polity with strengths and weaknesses: although it could not mobilize an

ethnically homogeneous 'people', it had the strength of accommodating regional differences in a system which imposed on England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales no novel, abstract formula (2000: 275).

This also meant that people expressed a sense of patriotism through civic duty and not as an attachment to a cultural, ethnic, and religious unity of people (Condor, 2000). National identity, as a result, came to be expressed through cultural texts like national newspapers or national television or radio. In their totality, however, there has been a tendency to avoid self-categorisation with any particular national identity (*ibid.*). This also meant that Englishness required a historical pedigree and indigeneity, whereas Britishness did not (Connor 2006). This has led to a general concern with showing a prejudiced 'interested' perspective which might be associated with chauvinistic nationalism.

Cohen (1995) discusses that the opacity of who is British is showcased through the various Acts that have been passed over the years, and the numerous nationality statuses they have represented. Cohen continues that 'the boundaries of 'British nationality, identity and citizenship are only very imprecisely drawn and understood' and very often defined by elite popular understandings (*ibid.*: 1). This complex national and social identity, then, needs to be redefined continuously through interactions with what it is not. However, as Cohen (*ibid.*) suggests 'these frontiers can be crossed at several points of access and linkage, but they also may constitute a formidable barrier to integration and the development of a pluralist society. The more open the frontier, the higher the levels of tolerance and association, the more closed the higher the levels of xenophobia'. This can also be seen through whose linguistic ability is valourised by the state and the requirements of who might be considered truly integrated – integration habitually taken as more achievable by those who can speak English (Macedo & Bartolomé 2014).

The discourse around British Values might at times resemble what Edward Said termed ‘Orientalism’. The Middle East and China were described as a big lump of people and cultures, who deep down wanted to be like the West, which gave the bodies there an indistinguishable character. For them to be understood by the West they needed to adopt the values of the West: democracy, capitalism and secularism or Christianity (Lary 2006). The backwardness could only be rectified with Western values being given to them. This reasoning is not new – empires were built on the assumption that barbarians (those foreign sounding and looking Others) needed to be civilised. Through the same assumption, the British Empire was built and sustained for so long. The same rhetoric is given to the incorporation of British Values in the teaching at schools and citizenship tests that migrants are required to take in order to be accepted in the mainstream culture. The implication is that ‘their’ culture is not good enough; it leads to extremism and other behaviours which undermine the well-being of the ‘native’ people. It could be argued that this notion that a culture is more valuable than others is not only relevant to those from other countries or cultures, but can also apply to people within, as for example, the urban poor who have come to occupy positions of lesser value based on their raced and classed identities, with both concepts being discussed below.

Structuring societies through racialisation

Race as a biological and social construct has been widely discussed and debated; the premise that there are distinct races with inherent biological and cultural characteristics being taken as little more than a myth - ‘there is no such thing as race’ (Nayak 2006). However, this does not mean that racialisation is not used to structure societies and maintain white privilege. Despite declarations of living in a post-racial society, race is still an issue, since discussions around race have not abated (Paul 2014). As it can be argued ‘biological unreality aside, race remains a dominant normative idea. Believed to be real, acted upon as real, race has practical effects and consequences. [...] Race remains a significant ‘real

object' independent of individual perception or individual rejection' (ibid.: 715-16).

One of the main issues with definitions of race, is the binary between White and Black. This firm distinction does not allow for the experiences of other ethnicities to be explored in relation to the intersectionality of race alongside gender, sexuality, and class. As Nayak (2003: 145) argues 'the multicultural and anti-racist factions that conveniently came to congregate beneath the shared umbrella of a black/white dichotomy are now finding that such assumptions are increasingly strained at the level of theory, political practice and cultural identity formation'. Therefore, subjects can no longer be divided into binary relations to racism; either 'anti-racist angels' or 'racist demons' (ibid.). This will lead to 'composite forms of discrimination and internal gradations within the categories 'white' and 'black'. By deconstructing whiteness in this way, one may allude to inter-ethnic nuances' (ibid.), revealing complex relationships with various groups which do not share the same white hegemonic culture. Therefore, beyond debates of skin colour lie questions of accepted cultures and ways of being.

Song (2013) argues that racism as a concept suffers from over-use, which leads to conceptual misunderstandings; with the media, ready to render any statement as racist and with social media making it very easy for anyone to comment on these incidents, without having the whole story behind all incidents. She also notes that in Britain this is an interesting time in history to discuss racism as it increasingly acquires an individualised nature. Therefore, questions of what racism is should include nuanced behaviours, not only through pronounced forms of intolerance that can cause divisions but more subtle ways, such as banter or creating a white bubble difficult to be penetrated by those who do not look the same.

Redcliff (2014) notes that with the end of the public services and the

welfare state, the end of race has also been proclaimed. However,

cultural retrenchment and coded xenophobia have also been sweeping the political terrain, accompanied by ‘new racisms’ and ‘new racial subjects’ [...] the country has shifted [...] away from celebrations of diversity towards an insistence on citizenship, community cohesion and Britishness. Older discourses of assimilation have been exhumed through an emphasis on an imperilled national identity (ibid.: 577-578).

This has meant that the forms of racism have grown subtler rather than disappeared. Kapoor (2013) refers to the shift in rhetoric under Thatcher, throughout the 1980s, with an emphasis on social interaction and adherence to ‘British Values’, which replaced discussions of racism and material inequality. This has taken explicit articulation of racism out of the public sphere and left them without state interference, muting the language which identifies the phenomenon (ibid.).

St Louis (2005) also phrases racial distinctions as seen through a discourse of difference. Citing Ford, he describes how the discourse of difference maps social, or what is defined as racial, identity onto an indeterminate but inherent or cultural trait. This results in more covert forms of discrimination, not straightforwardly racist, but attributing discrimination not on race but on ways of being, which do not have the same value as the dominant culture. This, according to St Luis (ibid.: 354), ‘aims at transforming previously stigmatised groups in a manner more totalising than straightforward exclusion’. This curbs the right-to-cultural difference, marginalising people who are not part of what is considered the ‘mainstream’ culture and divides people into groups, encouraging in/out groups to be formed and sustained even in places where co-existence is welcome and encouraged, eg. schools. Another detrimental effect is that this perpetuates stereotypes, and excludes people based on what common sense might attribute as not belonging to the right group. Therefore, race is not

discussed as something which perpetuates disadvantages for certain groups but more like through discourses of control and discipline. Increased policing and securitisation can in this sense, become legitimised, through the 'War on Terror' and the 'Prevent' strategy (Kapoor 2013).

As Bhabra (2016) noted this was showcased in recent events through the EU referendum vote. The racialized discourses that were at play meant that people became bodies in, or out of, place and their movements facilitated (as citizens) or constrained (as migrants). She argued that the referendum was less a debate on the pros and cons of membership than a proxy for discussions about race, namely who belonged and had rights and who did not (and, as a consequence, should be stripped of their rights). Thereby, by silencing the rhetoric on race the state has managed to eliminate inequality as an issue related to race, and has shifted all public discourse to the war on terror. This as Kapoor (2013) argues has removed any subjectivity from different (mainly those identified as Muslim) people and almost dehumanises them, making them abject and as a result without value. Discussions of what or who is of value extend to cultures and practices which hold value, as opposed to those who do not fit in the mainstream and should be silenced – in case they promote extreme behaviours. As Frankenberg (1993) also suggests racism is not obvious most of the times; it exists mainly through an institutional form, mainly because white people have come to assume whiteness as the norm. Racial difference, then, suggests deviance from the norm, and loses from the value given to the dominant existence (McWhorter 2005).

Hearing the proclamations of liberalism, tolerance, acceptance and inclusion it is surprising to see how the stated diversity has not materialized into ethnic and class diversity which can be accepted as equally normative. This can be explained by the fact that identifications can be eschewed by those who want to be labelled as liberal. As Long & Hylton (2002: 88) describe 'Part of the process is the labelling of the other while typically denying the labelling of the self. That is, until some crisis of confidence when an expression of collective

identity becomes important'. Who one is, therefore, can be defined by who one is not. As Cohen (1995) exemplifies this difference was often seen through the Other as constructed in the Empire; ultimately, the vast Empire and the forced interactions with the Other shaped how the British viewed themselves. The British identity, in this sense, became hegemonic and provided a blueprint for what were considered normative behaviours.

Race, according to Ladson-Billings (1998), a very complex concept, remains a term we employ, even when it does not make sense, to identify others. It has become embedded into everyday life and constructions of race are now subtle in a way that can be offensive without identification (ibid.). We tend to develop notions of conceptual 'blackness' and 'whiteness' and create normative categories through them. In this way "school achievement", 'middle-classness', 'maleness', 'beauty', 'intelligence', and 'science' become normative categories of whiteness, while categories like 'gangs', 'welfare recipients', 'basketball players', and the 'underclass' become the marginalized and de-legitimated categories of blackness' (ibid.: 9). Therefore, whiteness tends to be positioned as normative and everything else positioned against that.

As Hughey (2016) notes an academic interest in whiteness can be traced back to the 1860s. Since then we can identify three waves in whiteness studies.

The first wave of these inquisitions centered on the privilege and power of white racial identity contrasting with the ongoing construction and de jure and de facto marginalization of people of color. [...] The second wave of scholarship on whiteness explored the observation that whites generally have a lower degree of self-awareness about race and their own racial identity than do members of other racial groups. [...] The third wave of whiteness studies has done well to emphasize the changing and fluid character of white racial identities and their intersection with an array of subject

positions across the social axes of gender, class, sexuality, and nationality (ibid.: 212).

It is this last wave which underpins this study: the position that intersectionality drives individual agency and the context-specific attitudes of people.

Although not all white people experience whiteness the same way (for example, Lewis (2004) notes how whiteness is not experienced the same way by white lorry drivers, white single mothers, white prisoners, etc.), whiteness as an ideology becomes normative and natural in everyday interactions (Hughey 2016). Therefore, 'All racialized individuals are compelled to adhere to culturally valorized mythologies taught in social interaction, and which over time are accepted as *a priori* reality (ibid.: 214, emphasis in original). Certain schemata are, in a sense, internalised and are passed as dominant, as what is expected by one is based on their whiteness (along with gender, class, and nationality), allowing for colour-blind discourses to prevail (Ullucci & Battery 2011) or evokes silences in the absence of a racialized whiteness discourse (Mazzei 2008).

As Bonilla-Silva (2006) notes this colour blindness is like 'racism-lite'. Instead of calling people names, the new condescending rhetoric almost implies that minorities have not managed to do so well because they do not work hard enough. Post-racial discourses have placed race as an attribute not always valued, and therefore, not able to contribute to the economic proliferation of those who possess it. This allows for inequalities based on race to become legitimised and be seen as normative. It also enables white hegemony and privilege, while whites can 'enunciate positions that safeguard their racial interests without sounding 'racist'. Shielded by colour blindness, whites can express resentment towards minorities; criticise their morality, values and work ethic; and even claim to be the victims of 'reverse racism'.' (ibid.: 4).

Harris reinforces the same point. She recounts her family's story, concluding that

In ways so embedded that it is rarely apparent, the set of assumptions, privileges, and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset that whites sought to protect and that those who passed sought to attain - by fraud if necessary. Whites have come to expect and rely on these benefits, and over time these expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law (1993: 1711).

The same is found in the case of social workers in Australia. The Eurocentric policies, the taken-for-granted knowledge, and the un-reflexive white practices can harm the (non-white) Indigenous peoples (Young & Zubrzycki 2011).

Ware (1992) discusses the gendered and racialized nature that women are attributed through the social construction of race, whereby they become of less value than their white counterparts. She uses the example of an affluent white woman in an advertisement which showed how her nuclear family and her love for her baby are symbols which can save both the environment and the nation – they act as symbolic markers of whiteness in a way that a black woman might not be able to achieve. Her argument lies in the historical narratives of whiteness and blackness, which can be traced to slavery and colonialism. These points in history still shape the relationships between black and white people in post-industrial societies.

It can be argued that the narratives of the Empire tend to be taught in a way which ignores these tensions in the relationships of people with a different race. The narrative of the 'inner city' being synonymous with crime and unsafe neighbourhoods because black people live there ('the race problem') has shifted since the late 1980s (Ware 1992), with the inner city becoming desirable for the middle classes (Butler & Robson 2003). The authors discuss how today's

middle classes might not want to live in the safe suburbs and are increasingly choosing the excitement of the ethnically and socially diverse inner cities. Unlike the 19th and 20th centuries, when the middle-classes were abandoning the inner-city neighbourhoods and the complex problems the immigrants created there; the cosmopolitanism of the inner city is now desirable (Putnam 2000). Parents are keen to send their children to a school where there is ethnic and cultural diversity, unlike the 1980s, as described by Ware (1992). Parents used to fear the mixing of cultures and how this might affect their children's education, what they believed would confuse the children. However, parents at the time did not cite racism as the cause of their concerns, they were advocating for their right to choose a school which they believed would be suitable for their children. The same concerns are being expressed today – parents want to choose the right school for their children. The root of the concerns is wide-ranging from facilities to exam results. The demographic of the school is not cited as an issue for the parents; despite, as in the case of Mawerley, not choosing schools where the demographic is different to theirs.

Giroux (1999) discusses how whiteness became visible as a symbol of racial identity in the 1990s, as a moral panic over the racist, right-wing attacks on immigration politics which favoured whites and segregation. However, as Giroux argues there are still few attempts to provide young white people with a pedagogy which moves beyond whiteness as a monolithic experience, or which is beyond positions of guilt and resentment of times past.

Hughey (2012) suggests that even those whites who are fighting racism and are trying to eliminate racial inequality craft their understandings of the world, as white people in the world, using pre-established meanings and expectations of what white and black denotes. Their activism, therefore, in essence, solidifies what these racial markers symbolise and imprints on us a sense of who we are, impacting on our social value and self-worth (Tyler 2011). Therefore, according to Supriya (1999) whiteness, similar to gender and race

which are constructed socially, is a concept which needs to be understood through discourse and culture.

Whiteness, therefore, cannot act as a sole form of domination. In different contexts, forms of privilege might differ and be more significant or more influential. Therefore, we cannot categorise everyone as either privileged or oppressed. As Pease writes:

Not all men, for example, benefit equally from patriarchy and not all white people benefit equally from racism. While working-class men, for example, may exercise power over their female partners at home in, the context of paid work they will be dominated by foremen and bosses. In the light of this, as different dimensions of privilege and oppression can be more easily revealed through an intersectional analysis (2010: 20-21).

The opacity of class formations

Along with race, class was another theme around which the project centred. Tracing class definitions historically, it has been Goldthorpe's social class study which has placed a sociological emphasis on the distinctions between the classes. Goldthorpe (1980) removed cultural and moral dimensions from discussions of class and focused on employment and occupation as determinants of class position, and as a result, excluded inequalities of gender, race, and ethnicity as points of analysis.

Moving beyond this binary of class and its economic dimensions, Savage et al. (2015) conducted a class analysis, which aimed to redefine class boundaries in the 21st century. Distinctions of class, the authors argue, carry moral, cultural, as well as, economic, political and social characteristics. 'Class is fundamentally tied up with inequality. But not all economic inequalities are about class' (ibid.: 45). Savage et al. draw from Bourdieu and the idea of 'capitals' which can be

pre-emptive of one's future success. Focusing on cultural capital, a form of capital which is opaque, and often masked in a language of meritocratic achievement and hard work. The opacity of cultural capital is necessary for it to work appropriately, because the minute it is seen as a privilege, it becomes contested and challenged, primarily by those who experience it (ibid.). Cultural capital, therefore, in postmodern societies takes 'iconic and cosmopolitan forms which appear to be pluralist and anti-elitist' (ibid.: 51). Class, as a concept then, transfers onto the "moralisation of place", the way that neighbourhoods evoke powerful cultural connotations based on the characteristics of their residents: stigmatised, respectable, posh, [...] Class thus becomes etched on to the landscape in powerful and evocative ways' (ibid.: 52). Class becomes an all-encompassing trait which is more than one's financial status but extends onto a way of being.

Despite the changing nature of class identities, it could be argued that class is still a salient and defining feature. On the one hand, there is the white working class who has come into the fore with the election of Trump in America and the Brexit vote in the UK. Those 'left behind' have been discussed by the media and politicians aplenty in 2016 and 2017. They occupy a precarious position in the new neoliberal social system, while suffering from gross inequalities across much of the developed world, while being able to be part of the mainstream through language and integration because of their race (Gest, 2016). Although they are seen as having more privileges than ethnic minorities, they face the same, if not worse, injustices stemming from social distinctions. The negative rhetoric used in the media has classified the working classes as uneducated, racist, and unable to take balanced decisions. They have been blamed for a lot of the political ills which have happened in the past few months. As Tyler (2008: 23) discussed some 'claim middle-class identity as a site of injury and oppression (subject to terrorisation by violent chavs) and thus actively defend (and reproduce) upper middle-class entitlement'. The media frame the working classes as those primarily responsible for the divisions within society,

because of their inability to embrace liberal values. The problem with this is that those who are pathologised very rarely have the opportunity to express their views on mass media and make their points known, since mainstream media tend to project particular points of view; alienating those who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. It is argued, then, that certain depictions of the white working class both motivate social divisions and sustain structural inequalities. These classed divisions and inequalities can be conveyed through everyday practices; often under the rhetoric of acceptance and tolerance.

As Bakhtin (1981) suggested identity and the development of self are constituted through social contexts. It is mediated through words, voices and forms of discourse. These forms of development are dialogical and are not always pleasant and easy. Through these dialogues people form their moral identity, which is not only done through self-reflection, but it is ‘a process of ‘ideological becoming’ whereby one appropriates the words, language and forms of discourse of others with whom one is in dialogue’ (Tappan, 2005: 57). Class identity, which can form part of this ideological becoming, then, becomes ideologically constructed through exclusions and the creation of borders (Bratlinger, 1996: 574). Similar to the mothers who participated in Bratlinger’s study (*ibid.*), new middle-class parents feel comfortable with liberal discourses but do not easily identify with capitalist discourses or the idea of perpetuating privilege. Bratlinger discusses how the mothers felt that ‘their children would gain from stratified and segregated, rather than equitable and inclusive school structures’, but they were not comfortable taking an openly elitist, conservative position on schooling. Contrastingly, ‘subtle ideological operations allowed them to deny advantage and explain the accomplishments of their offspring in a way that legitimated class privilege’ (*ibid.*: 590). Or it would be the case that exclusion was ostensibly imposed on them.

McLaren provided some more examples of how class might be lived through:

Class relationships reflect the constraints and limitations individuals and groups experience in the areas of income level, occupation, place of residence, and other indicators of status and social rank. People don't inhabit cultures or social classes but live out class or cultural relations, some of which may be dominant and some of which may be subordinate (1998:175).

Weber believed that social groups might be amorphous in kind, but they have at least one similarity: a common interest in consuming similar cultural goods and by doing so, are eligible for a certain social status and access to particular social groups (Hechter 2004; Weber 1978). As Weber wrote 'Status honour is normally expressed by the fact that above all else a specific style of life is expected from all those who wish to belong to the circle. Linked with this expectation are restrictions in social intercourse' (ibid.: 932). It can be argued, therefore, that class has an all-encompassing nature which can be reflected through a range of practices.

Butler and Robson (2003) argue that Britain is a classed society but class is not something which defines people's lives. People no longer simplistically accept the divisions of Us vs. Them, but class remains salient through choices people make which define their future and their life prospects, for example by looking at university of choice or choice of higher education in the first place. Freeman (2004) suggests that systems of representations (ie. what would typically be expected by someone who is stereotypically positioned within a certain social class) run the risk of strengthening these stereotypes and social values associated with them. Freeman (ibid.) argues that labels tend to narrow our notions of how we conceptualise people and create dividing social agendas; however, there needs to be a public discourse of the impact of social class on people's lives, since the lack of it leads to the perpetuation of divisive social

structures and unequal life opportunities.

Sayer (2005) also points to the embarrassing nature of class. People do not always want to identify with their class position because of the morally problematic nature of this positioning: 'people's life-chances and who they become are strongly influenced by the accident of their natal class and the inequalities which follow from this' (ibid.: 1). Sayer claims that despite the declining relevance of class today, popular culture is very much still defined by class differences, although it is not named as such. Ball argues that:

Class awareness then lies within and just beneath the obvious, in the practices of division. It is as much about who you are not, who you could not consider being, as who you are. [...] The distinctions and identifications of class are embedded in non-cognitive dispositions as well as the minutiae of the everyday perceptions and fears. In one form, class struggles are realized within the everyday interweaving of diverse tapestries of behaviour. Class is made visceral and palpable in the practical closures and exclusions of choice, which are achieved and maintained within families and social networks and in the interactions between families and social networks and social institutions (2003: 177, 179).

Reay (2005) argues that in the British society class is very much entrenched into our psyche. Although there is a consensus that class is a thing of the past it still fashions the self, and the fact that there is not an accepted narrative within which to challenge class can cause great harm. Suggestively, she comments on the intersectionality of class, race, and gender and she suggests that in inner cities it is often difficult to separate race and class; however, she proposes that 'such complicated combinations of guilt, defensiveness, empathy and conciliation are most frequently generated in response to social class inequalities in the educational marketplace. It is class rather than racial euphemisms that abound'

(ibid.: 919).

Giddens (1991) believes that the new individualized society has brought the demise of class and other group identifications. Savage (2000), on the other hand, suggests that this individualism has rendered middle class practices as the norm in industrialised societies. Even if one does not identify as middle class, they need to follow middle-class normative behaviours for social, educational and professional advancement. Therefore, as Gillies (2005) suggests prosperity comes from being the right kind of (middle-class) self, while poverty and disadvantage is associated with poor self-management. This narrative has driven from the top down a need to empower oneself by taking responsibility for one's actions and by generating opportunities for yourself by equipping yourself with the right kind of tools.

Kuhn (1995) suggests that class is not something which can be defined or quantified but rather something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your psyche, at the core of your being; therefore, it carries extreme significance. Skeggs (1997) similarly argues that class identities are constituted through the various acquisitions of capitals; therefore, people strive to create distinctions for themselves linked to their physical appearance, educational credentials, social decorum, wealth, and other positioning strategies which place them within the brackets of what is considered normative for their culture. Weis (2014:315) predicts that as we move into more unstable, competitive times, class positionality will become increasingly more important rather than lose its grip on everyday practices and social circumstances; while, the manner to which one is born will not 'automatically assure the transference of privileged class status'.

Butler & Robson (2003) seem sceptical of whether we should derive straightforward correlative connections between class and culture. They call for a more sensitive approach to examining everyday choices within their context and cultural tastes and how they might be derived by class divisions. They do suggest, however, that economic capital can lead to cultural reproduction as it

can equip (middle class) children with the credentials to succeed (often derived from private education) and with the social confidence to lead a culturally enriched life, habitually through independence of mind, abstract thought, flexibility and reflexive social control (ibid.).

Goldthorpe (2010) notes that class relations show persistence, especially regarding life chances and social action. He believes, however, that despite the persisting structural differences there are more working-class people which are included in education now. There is still great progress that needs to be done, and the playing field is not at all level; however, there is some progress, despite being nominal.

Parents, therefore, and their involvement in their children's education, which can resemble social engineering, are placed at the epicentre of transmitting class to their offspring. Education, is at the heart of how class reproduction might ensure. As Ball describes the process:

‘class [...] is productive and reactive. It is an identity based upon modes of being and becoming or escape and forms of distinction that are realized and reproduced in specific social locations [...] [it] realized and struggled over in the daily lives of families and institutions, in consumption decisions, as much as in the processes of production, and particularly at moments of crisis and contradiction as parents think about the well-being and happiness and futures of their offspring. [...] Education as a field of distinctions and identities is crucial in high modern society in changing and reproducing the borderlines of class and distributing unevenly and unequally forms of social and cultural capital’ (2003: 6-8).

Middle class parents tend to be involved in their children's schooling and can be responsible for choices their offspring make (DeVault 2003; Freeman 2004; Jørgensen et al. 2016). As Freeman (2004) argues, parental involvement does not guarantee the success of the children at school, nor do they create the current

conditions of inequality that exist in education; however, they play into the dominant ideological hands, the morality of some of their practices not coming under scrutiny since it forms part of an overriding middle-class parental culture: having your child's best interests at heart. However, the active involvement of middle class parents is still seen as desirable and as something which should be taught to other groups of parents (Freeman 2004).

Although neither government nor local authorities will often identify the issue of failing pupils as a classed phenomenon, it is a criterion often associated with class which counts considerably with regards to educational attainment: financial security. A recent study conducted by the Social Mobility Commission found that children from poor backgrounds experience a considerable drop off in progress in secondary schools (Social Mobility Commission, 2017). Since 2012 poorer pupils have been making noticeably less progress over the years, often resulting in dropping out of school or getting fewer qualifications which, ultimately, gives fewer opportunities in later life. Although the differences are starker within schools, rather than across schools, the findings suggest that these pupils have access to fewer resources and less is expected of them, with clear difference across the social gradient. The group which seems to experience the most difficulty in this respect is white poor boys rather than their ethnic peers, suggesting that perhaps parental support can enhance one's educational chances; especially when the school is not adequately resourced. Parental support can be considered an instrumental factor, as it can be a mixture of their own aspirations and the financial means to pursue said aspirations.

Lareau (2003) argues that there has been a shift in what is considered to be legitimised practice for childrearing. It becomes more and more common for parents to be involved in their children's educational practices and support the advancement of their leisure talents and cognitive growth, acting as cultivators themselves. Lareau (ibid.) supports that these family practices should be seen across a number of social spheres, with social class being at the core of the

various contexts. Lareau and Weininger (2003) give as an example how a middle-class family can implement cultural capital towards the educational advantage of their child in a way that a family under the poverty line cannot.

Middle-class parents, therefore, tend to prefer schools which can teach their children the 'rules of good behaviour, ie. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is destined for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination' (Althusser 1971: 132).

The fact that middle-class parents choose middle-class schools is well documented (Butler & van Zanten 2007; Butler et al. 2007; Maloutas 2007; Noreisch 2007; Popeau et al. 2007; Reay 2001 [for the social reproduction this practice involves]). However, it might also be the case that middle-class parents suggest that while they possess more material resources and are positioned in a more advantaged position within the society, are still struggling to secure these same advantages for their children (Stephens & Gillies 2011).

Living in London offers plenty of opportunities for the development of social and cultural capitals; however, schooling remains a thorny issue for middle-class families. Despite the differences in their aspirations, because of professional occupation or levels of parental education, the choice of schools is instrumental to most middle-class families (Ball et al. 2004). Robson & Butler (2001) argue that middle-class parents in predominantly white, middle-class areas form strong social networks and develop complex and sophisticated strategies for educational choices. It can be argued that these sophisticated practices nowadays extend beyond moving houses to be in the right catchment area or paying for fees at a private school. They include much simpler but more instrumental practices, such as choosing the 'right kind' of private school, or forming strong networks with people in the area, a practice, which it can be suggested, is mainly reserved for mothers.

Familial involvement, therefore, varies in terms of which gender is seen as the most active in making decisions. Although it is both parents which ultimately make the decision on the school choice, or would be seen as actively being involved in the cognitive growth of the child, it is mainly the mothers who seem to have more knowledge on the schools and how they are best equipped to enrich their children's potential. Fathers have a different role, often seen as those who provide more fun entertainment mostly at the weekends (Lareau 2000; Wall & Arnold 2007).¹

The fact that middle class parents move to catchment areas to be able to send their children to a good state school has been discussed elsewhere (Holme 2002; Andre-Bechely 2005), where it can be seen that through their networks of friends and family, who usually have the same economic advantages, they make choices of schools and more importantly areas. However, it can be argued that there still needs to be analysis of what happens when parents are drawn to the areas because of the wider locality, and what school choices they make then, when the move does not include a school which they are willing to send their children to.

Parental aspiration and ideologies are also important regarding not only the choice of school but also extra-curricular activities, after school hours. The socioeconomic status of middle class families and professional aspiration might value traits such as responsibility, self-discipline, and respect towards others. Therefore, the activities they encourage (but not insist on) usually revolve around those which 'offer their children the opportunity to have fun, to be physically active, to discover and enhance special skills, and to develop self-esteem, commitment, social skills, teamwork, and helping behaviours' (Dunn et al. 2003: 1359).

¹ As I discuss later, at St Aber's it was primarily mothers who attended Open Days, were more 'in the loop' about schools and relied on their social networks for school advice.

Socioeconomic determinants then, not only account for character development but also an overall healthier lifestyle (Côté 1999; Duncan et al. 2002; Wilson 2002). For many parents, physical enhancement can be illustrative of the lived experience of power and privilege, offering families a strategic opportunity to develop and promote the various capitals they possess; a practice which is integral to the perpetuation of their position within the dominant group (DeLuca 2010).

Bernstein (1990) notes how parents introduce and maintain principles of conduct, character and manner, with their regulative practice. These invisible pedagogies, as he calls them, prepare the children for social order. He notes that through these practices 'the child acquires a particular elaborated variant of communication which gives rise to an elaborate repertoire of manipulative skills' (ibid.: 73). He argues that 'the construction of these communicative competences is likely to be classed-based' (ibid.: 73), putting at a disadvantage the children who do not get the same preparation at home and are likely to have less success at school; since they are likely to misinterpret cultural practices and are likely to be misinterpreted by others. This lack of invisible pedagogies is also likely to deprive children of the confidence or self-efficacy which more commonly characterises middle-class children, and which can prove of particular importance in defining moments, such as interviews or applying in particular universities; practices which have embedded in them class homologies. (Ball 2003). Therefore, if parents want to ensure that their child is prepared for such situations, Ball (ibid.) suggests that a common need is to keep them separated off from settings of failure or low-achievement; while extending parental involvement and providing professional support.

Gillies (2005) comments on the government's drive to place families at the heart of the policy agenda, which means that childrearing is regulated, primarily placing working-class parents at the centre of a drive to raise their children like middle-class children. Through analysing the ways that children are raised by distinctive parents, the government is asserting that for children to

become bright pupils, they need to be accustomed to the skills that are at the heart of middle-class parenting; while the assumption that middle class children have the potential to be bright, clever, and succeed is something which is vocalised by teachers, parents, and the children themselves (ibid.). Moreover, as Birenbaum-Carmeli (1999: 63) points out ‘the difference between the classes seems to exemplify a general problem with the notion of parent participation and empowerment. Parental power is anchored in historical, geographical, class, and gender contexts’. Therefore, the right to participate, is branded universal, but mainly exercised by established actors and excludes the less privileged, as it appears to be out of their reach (ibid.). This leads to a pathologisation of the working-class culture, who might be branded as not aspirational enough.

Tolerance and privilege through racialised and classed discourses

Privileged positions and how they might be negotiated in a liberal setting needs to be discussed with relation both to notions of racism and class reproduction. Individuals oftentimes want to believe that ‘we live in an equal society and if you work hard enough, you can make it to the top’, without often acknowledging that if everyone was equal there would not be a top (hooks 2010:5). Therefore, discourses of privilege and luck are substituted by tolerance, openness and welcoming dispositions, branded as liberalism.

The idea of modern notions of race and racism have been discussed using Foucault’s concepts of biopower and the enhancement of the body and the development of the self. Foucault urged us not to see power as a concept which exists within the subject and which renders those who possess it able to completely dominate over others. As he described it:

[power] is never localized here or there, it is never in the hands of some, and it is never appropriated in the way that wealth or a commodity can be appropriated. Power functions. Power is

exercised through networks, and individuals do not simply circulate in those networks; they are in a position to both submit to and exercise this power; they are always its relays (2003: 30).

McWhorter (2005) discusses Foucault's notion of power and suggests that even though it is up to the individual how they will assert their position of power, power is not something which is distributed equally. Contrastingly, it is something which is always contested, extended, cultivated and interacts with knowledge; the two concepts providing each other with support. The new kind of power which emerged after the 18th century meant that power came through cultivating individuals and reconstructing them to become functioning members of their group (ibid.). This, argued Foucault, came with increased surveillance and with the enhancement of the body, and with the continuous development of the self – what Foucault called biopower (ibid.).

Foucault believed that racism, as he analysed in *The History of Sexuality*, is a recent phenomenon, occurring in its current form from the 20th century, which resulted from the attempts to purify the blood through, at the time, sexual surveillance. As Foucault explains, less fit or inferior races were seen as deviant and therefore, were not allowed to mix with the dominant races, for fear of harming the health of the population as a whole (ibid.). This, by extension, has shaped racism to be institutional rather than tied to one's subjectivity.

Gramsci (1971) attributes great meaning to education and educational institutions as places which contribute to the social, economic, and political dominance of the 'intellectuals', a term attributed primarily because of one's class, and the consent manufactured through those who occupy hegemonic spaces. Gramsci believed that everyone was capable of being an intellectual but the structures imposed both by the political and the civil society, do not allow everyone to develop individual thinking. Cultural hegemonic practices were reproduced in the public sphere through the media, universities and religious

institutions. Gramsci (ibid.) also placed the family at the heart of solidifying hegemonic norms of legitimacy.

In a whole series of families, especially in the intellectual strata, the children find in their family life a preparation, a prolongation and a completion of school life; they ‘breathe in’, as the expression goes, a whole quantity of notions and attitudes which facilitate the educational process properly speaking. They already know and develop their knowledge of the literary language, ie. the means of expression and of knowledge, which is technically superior to the means possessed by the average member of the school population (31).

Extending beyond the theoretical positions of Foucault and Gramsci, Bourdieu’s definition of habitus provides another way of classifying habitual practices. Bourdieu defines habitus as:

‘Class habitus is a durable system of structuring tastes and preferences for certain practices and dispositions which contribute to the development of a particular, classifiable lifestyle, and it is acquired through personal understanding of one’s actual social, cultural, and economic status (Bourdieu, 1977). Therefore, habitus implies a “‘sense of one’s place’ but also a ‘sense of the place of others’” (Bourdieu 1989: 18). It is important to recognize that habitus constructs “a world that seems self-evident” (Bourdieu *ibid.*: 19).

According to Bourdieu people do not always consciously think of their actions, as people tend to take for granted some of their actions if they are done in a way which resembles their social surroundings. Bourdieu continues describing how dispositions are constructed based on one’s surroundings:

as a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:18)

[it] has the function of overcoming the alternative between consciousness and unconsciousness [...] And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself 'as a fish in water', it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu 1989: 43)

Bourdieu's theory can provide the basis for explanation of how those from privileged backgrounds have the predispositions to adapt to certain social situations and practices; they can be like 'fish in water' and can prove valuable as a theoretical tool when describing lifestyles. His notion of capitals: social, economic and cultural are crucial in theorising class reproduction (Erickson 1996). However, as the discussions and ethnographic data will aim to argue, people can feel moral anxieties about their actions, or they might try to diverge from what these preconceptions might be. Therefore, we take note of some criticisms of Bourdieu's theory of habitus and its deterministic nature, as it does not always reflect post-modern millennials (Shilling 2003); it does not take into account individual agency (Hargreaves 1982; Laberge 1995); and maintains women's role as one firmly placed in the household (DeLuca 2010).

Experiencing privilege and trying to navigate one's self through moral anxieties which might ensue from this can be multifaceted. As McGhee (2005) argues, the increased reflexivity when it comes to racialised attitudes has a focus not on the tolerance of the Other, people do not always try to welcome difference and embrace it, rather it is on the intolerance of the intolerance: people feeling the need to condemn behaviours which do not fit in with modern/tolerant societies. This does not always imply that those who condemn such actions are

ready to act against them or they do not show similar behaviours themselves.

This non-commitment implies a non-performativity since saying does not always imply doing, according to Ahmed (2004). By saying rather than doing can extend racism rather than challenge it; it can perpetuate inequalities and false impressions. By saying something does not always imply that the conditions for action have been met, and therefore, does not presuppose any meaningful investment or change. In the UK, there is an idealistic notion of what the nation can offer to those who are not British. Through the discourse of multiculturalism, there is the connotation that there is a form of conditional love towards the Other (Ahmed, 2014). The nation is described as ‘‘being’ plural, open and diverse; as being loving and welcoming to others’ (ibid.: 133). Even though immigrants might not be required to change, there is a strong need for them to embrace British Values, take Britishness as their object of love; try to integrate, speaking the same language being an imperative for them.

Ahmed (2004) suggests that there is a paradox in utterances of anti-racism and expressions of shame for what the Other might have suffered because of our choices.

The shameful white subject expresses shame about its racism, and in expressing its shame, it ‘shows’ that it is not racist: if we are shamed, we mean well. The white subject that is shamed by whiteness is also a white subject that is proud *about* its shame. The very claim to feel bad (about this or that) also involves a self-perception of ‘being good’. Anti-racism may even provide the conditions for a new discourse of white pride.

Advancing this argument, on how tolerance can cause harm without the actors realising it, we can draw from Castagno’s (2014) ethnographic work in a white, conservative area of the US. The main tenet of her work examines how whiteness works through niceness. She discusses how what is considered universally nice is systematically linked to whiteness. Being nice glosses over ugly,

uncomfortable truths. The school she studied provided a very detailed policy on how to achieve diversity. She discusses how the policy, full of open directives and platitudes, tries to address a very pervasive issue, by being ‘nice’. Therefore, she comments that it is impossible to do what it sets out to address. She believes that whiteness makes us tackle such issues by adopting policies which can be branded as too nice, and as a result, make inequality harder to see. As she discusses:

‘Within schools, niceness often defines appropriate—and even good—behaviours, interactions, norms, and policies. The power of niceness to shape daily phenomena is far reaching. Diversity and niceness are so intertwined that any engagement with diversity is necessarily, almost by definition, nice. This is not the case with engaging inequity and whiteness. But diversity in schools has been framed in such a way as to require a stance of inclusion, optimism, and assimilation. [...] Whiteness maintains power and privilege by perpetuating and legitimating the status quo while simultaneously maintaining a veneer of neutrality, equality, and compassion. [...] Niceness, and by extension, whiteness are very difficult to critique because they are concepts interwoven with compassion and tolerance’ (ibid.: 4,6).

Under the guise of tolerance, it is rendered hard to see how certain practices might exclude those who attribute significance to different values. Mitchell (2003) argues that tolerance is closely linked to what is seen as strategically positioning yourself within diversity. The spirit of multiculturalism and diversity has shifted from the concern of being tolerant and democratic citizens, to a more strategic use of diversity for competitive advantage (ibid.). Mitchell (ibid.) continues that multiculturalism is part of a broader narrative of liberalism and the freedom of the individual, helping to ‘perform’ the liberal nation rather than engage with this diversity. However, Mitchell (ibid.: 388) is sceptical of how the ‘multicultural self’ able to work with and through difference, has now become

the 'strategic cosmopolitan': 'motivated not by ideals of national unity in diversity, but by the understandings of global competitiveness, and the necessity to strategically adapt as an individual to rapidly shifting personal and national contexts'. There is, then, a shift to a meaner, harder logic of competition on a global scale through strategic cosmopolitanism. Multiculturalism in the local context deemed a problem which is dealt with by the state, with negative connotations at times.

It is often that difference in cultural practices can create schisms among the various groups. Ware (1992) gives the example of the public outcry over the Muslim girls who were sold for marriage by their father in Birmingham in the 1980s. The story of their mother who was trying to rescue them was broadly covered in the media, with the reader invited to share the distaste of the mother in the practices of the Muslim community. In the way described in the media, the women in this culture are forced into submission, and are deprived of social and economic rights, and most importantly their independence; the position of the women in this society showcases the level of civilisation the particular society has (not) achieved (ibid.).

Cultural engagements

More broadly, as Spracklen (2013: 5) describes variances in cultural engagement from tourism to sport to music act as sites of power relation and 'leisure choices are used to construct exclusive, white identities – whiteness associated with individualism and elitism but also subordinate whitenesses that do the political work of the elites while being hegemonically constrained'. This results in universalising the white culture 'through communicative agency and instrumentailised consumption' (ibid.); what Bourdieu described as cultural capital.

Admittedly, there has been a shift in what is considered highbrow culture by young people. Although private schools, and potentially parents, are still

advocates of activities which promote one's social and cultural capital, young people are more open-minded. They go against snobbishness and they are open to appreciating other cultures. They have become what Peterson and Kern (1996) call omnivorous: they consume other cultures. This does not happen indiscriminately, but via an appreciation of a wider range of practices. This is mainly because of social media and the ubiquity of different cultures and aesthetic practices, especially in multicultural places, such as London.

It is important to mention sport in some more detail, as engagement with sport was at the core of St Aber's ethos, but also featured prominently in how students formed affiliations both with the school and with their nation. Darnell (2007:560) discusses sport vis-à-vis the lived experience of race; how international movements to enhance global south countries through sport 'serve in the (re)construction of particular knowledge: Whiteness as a subject position of benevolence, rationality and expertise, confirmed in opposition to marginalized, unsophisticated and appreciative bodies of colour'. Therefore, sport practices can function as an element of exclusion or of superiority. Darnell continues that through sport practices whiteness is not seen as a collection of white bodies but 'as a racial characteristic that assumes and presumes a normative social position through the discursive intersections of gender, class, sexuality, domesticity, respectability and superiority, and that allows for the intelligibility of racialised bodies' (ibid.: 563). Even though sport is considered as colour-blind or innately socially integrative, it is the allocation of resources which can create racialised boundaries. Harrison (2013), for example, discusses how certain sports, such as skiing, occupy certain racial spatialities, acquiring a predominantly white character, acting as a site where racism is reinforced.

Bourdieu (1978) asks how a taste for certain sports is acquired by some people, giving sport classed connotations. He believes that the supply of certain sports is there to meet a particular social demand. He also suggests that agents from different social milieu choose between different sports both as a physical activity and a spectacle. Bourdieu notes that the shift to sports as a social activity

happened in the educational establishments reserved for the 'elites' of the bourgeois society, ie. the English public schools. At schools, sports became social practices integrated into the collective calendar of the school, whereby bodily exercises functioned as an end in themselves, 'a sort of physical art for art's sake, governed by specific rules, increasingly irreducible to any functional necessity' (ibid.: 823). He compares how even though with old age engagement in physical activity tends to decline, this is more so among the working classes, when past adolescence (and the time for sport) comes the time for marriage and other serious responsibilities of adulthood. Moreover, as Bourdieu notes sport is seen as 'training in courage and manliness, 'forming the character', and inculcating the 'will to win' which is the mark of the true leader, but a will to win within the rules' (ibid.: 824). All these are aspects which are consistently promoted via the emphasis on extra-curricular activities and through the narrative of sport and exercise seen as practices which sculpt the legitimate body and the legitimate use of the body (ibid.); often contrasted with those who do not pay adequate attention to their body either through wrong dietary choices or not ample physical activity. As Shilling (1992) argues the corporeal training students undergo at schools is part of one's cultural, or physical, capital, which contributes to other forms of capital; while Warde (2006) describes how the culture of the body and body management techniques have become conspicuous in recent decades.

As Lawler (2005) suggests the middle classes are willing to tolerate and at times embrace ethnic cultural diversity, as part of a cosmopolitan capital, as a way of showcasing their liberal credentials and secure their class positioning (May 1996), but they still manifest disgust towards their working-class others, through expulsion and practices of exclusion. Their emblematic whiteness gives them a status of a separate ethnic group, and almost hyper-whitens them (ibid.). Therefore, they are excluded from the normative (middle-class) culture as they are perceived as common, with bad taste. Haylett (2003: 57) points out that working class cultures are positioned in the apex of social problems, and are seen

as ‘in need and usually in receipt but not capable of giving or teaching anything of worth to dominant centres of value (public space, political institutions, middle class ways of being). Haylett (ibid.) concludes that this ‘lumping together’ of working class differences results in framing economic inequality as economic difference. Illustratively, Kulz (2013) found that schools can serve as arenas of perpetuating raced and classed structural inequalities by pathologising those who did not follow normative (middle-class) behaviours. Adjustments were then made in the cultural practices of the pupils she studied to ensure that they accrued valued as neoliberal subjects and adhere to middle-class normative behaviours.

Pheterson (1986) defined the hegemonic and privileged positions people occupy as stemming from an internalised domination, by accepting that there are dominant groups and there are prejudices against others. Although this can explain why sometimes people unconsciously may harm others, it does not account for the institutional and structural dimensions which might be in place and perpetuate privilege (Pease 2010). Therefore, escaping one’s position of privilege might be almost impossible. Bourdieu’s (1977) theory which suggests that certain practices become habitual helps us to understand why certain attitudes which harm or disadvantaged others might go unnoticed. Privilege is constructed both psychologically and socially; therefore, some practices which advantage some and disadvantage others are normalised through their social context. Therefore, even though it is important for individuals to ‘acknowledge the privileges they have and to speak out against them, it is impossible to simply relinquish privilege’ (Pease 2010: 26). One is always part of the system which perpetuates such structural inequalities; it is how these structural inequalities might be challenged (or not) which might make a difference. As Brod (1989:280) puts it: ‘Privilege is not something I take and which I therefore have the option of not taking. It is something that society gives me and unless I change the institutions which give it to me, they will continue to give it to me and I will continue to have it, however noble and egalitarian my intentions’.

Sayer (2005), however, distances himself from the Bourdieusian (and

Hobbesian) pursuit of advantage; claiming that people not always act in search of power and recognition, but a lot of the struggles and decisions people make on an everyday basis, stems from their worry of how to live. He maintains that

‘we are evaluative beings, continually monitoring and assessing our behaviour and that of others, needing their approval and respect, but in contemporary society this takes place in the context of inequalities such as those of class, gender and ‘race’ which affect both what we are able to do and how we are judged’ (ibid.:1).

Caletrío (2012) urges social scientists who want to understand inequality in educating and society to pay more attention to the practices of the elites rather than the disadvantaged groups, as there have been more concerted efforts to analyse the poor, who admittedly have much less choice with regards to their actions. Attending a private school is in itself a marker of class, separating those who can afford such elite education from the rest. The ‘material privileges also work symbolically to define who they are and their status group as ‘elite’ compared to other schools who are less or under-resourced (Koh 2014:196). Koh (ibid.) and Mullen (2009) argue that the futures of the pupils who attend such schools have a predetermined path based on their education and family background, most of the times to an elite higher education institution. Koh (ibid.) argues that in the case of Singapore this projection is discussed under the guise of meritocracy. Those who get unfair advantages are believed to have the talents which allows for non-egalitarianism. A certain discourse has been adopted by the government, eliminating the lexicon of class from the public sphere; instead, there is talk of ‘social stratification’, ‘social mobility’, ‘widening gap income’; phrases which imply that all these issues can be rectified (ibid.). Similar findings were reported by Kennedy & Power (2010) who studied elite private schools in Ireland, where meritocratic ideologies sustain class advantage through schooling.

Admittedly, our culture places meritocracy at the centre of achievement and personal development. There is still an unattested belief that ‘If you work hard, persevere, and live right, you will earn your place in the socioeconomic hierarchy. This myth presupposes the belief that we are all isolated individuals seeking our own benefit in a competitive environment’ (Amico 2017:19). Despite the individual differences in talent, potential, and intelligence, the myth of meritocracy which has been perpetuated through the years is that some people choose to try hard and achieve things while others choose to be on benefits and stay at home.

The choice of school, and other social activities and lifestyle choices, do not come without their moral implications. Oftentimes the aspirational middle classes feel they have no other choice but they still feel moral anxieties on whether ‘doing the best for your child’ justifies the means (Reay 2004). They often have to invest huge amounts of resources, emotional energy and time in their attempts to find a school which is appropriate for their children (Butler & Robson 2003). Ball (2003) and van Zanten and Velema (2001) comment on the fact that middle class parents have to engage in a complex cobbling together of values and principles and discuss them vis-à-vis the school choices they make, which might not seem ethical or liberal, based on the values they claim to promote. Decisions, therefore, need to be taken based on what people like ‘us’ do and can be taken as part of a collectivity, which is primarily defined by the social locale and by putting the family first. Therefore, despite the anguish over the choice of a school which does not adhere to their liberal values, they cite necessities and impossibilities of choice, in order to repair their liberal credentials (Ball 2003). In the case of choosing a private school, the response is that there is a particular type of private school which they choose; an attempt to reconcile their individualistic narrative with a collectivist outlook (ibid.).

According to Reay et al. (2011) the middle classes have some unique characteristics with regards to their values and their justifications. They are liberal and have moral sensitivities; however, they are trapped in a situation for

which they can do very little about. They realise that they have a position of privilege and this is in contrast to their liberal views but they also realise that they do not have enough means to account for such inequalities or the necessary power to change the situation. Despite the hegemonic status which certain groups occupy, the lived experience of privilege is not always as deterministic as described by Bourdieu. Inequalities in contemporary society stimulate affective responses, as they affect individuals on a psychological and social level (Reay 2015; Todd et al. 2010). Middle-class parents tend to be more uninterested in conformity and they feel it is their moral obligation to integrate with difference and diversity (Burns Stillman 2012). This has led to gentrified neighborhoods, where there is a mix of classes and ethnicities; however, as prices rise those with not enough financial means are slowly pushed out of the area, with this process working to the benefit of the white, middle-class families.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the literature on how the idyllic white rural countryside can still be replicated in urban settings. The way Mawerley has come to be depicted resembles the white, middle or upper-class pockets of rural Britain; a portraiture of safety and tranquillity. This has led to an examination of the studies looking at what or who can be defined as British or English and what these terms entail. The chapter has also considered how questions of Englishness acquire a racialised undertone, enacted primarily through raced and by extension, classed identities. This has led to an overview of how the concepts of tolerance and privilege are realised vis-à-vis the classed and racialised Other. These nuances were far from covered in their entirety but these concepts will also be expanded in the chapters where the themes are discussed in some detail. With these conceptual themes looked at from a theoretical point, the next chapter will look at the methods which were utilised to collect qualitative data on the concepts outlined above.

Chapter Three

Methodological Considerations: Conducting Fieldwork

This chapter discusses the processes of designing the research, negotiating access and being in the field and how this ethnography came to be in its current form. Conducting qualitative research can be messy and difficult to predict, even while being in the field. I describe the difficulties in deciding the focus of my project, and how the circumstances of the project changed and so did my research question. I outline how I collected data and what decisions needed to be made on what to include in this thesis. I detail my concerns with regards to the research process, both on how the research focus has changed and the ethics of an ethnographic approach, and my own position in the field, questioning whether as an insider my insights and interpretations were one-dimensional, and the ethical dilemmas this has yielded. I then focus on why I believe the everyday

can be one of the most fascinating places of interrogation and can act as a fruitful social research setting, if a researcher wants to understand not only the answers given in interviews or questionnaires but broader social contexts, in this case not only St Aber's but Mawerley more widely.

Being part of the context

The thesis is based on a detailed case study of St Aber's and Mawreley that drew on upon ethnographic methods for data collection and analysis. I believe the description provided by Delamont and Atkinson (1995: 15) accurately describes my study and how I perceived the data collection processes which occurred: 'research on and in educational institutions based on participant observation and/or permanent recordings of everyday life in naturally occurring settings'. Moreover, as Spindler (1982: 154) suggests ethnographic methods require 'direct observation, it requires being immersed in the field situation'. As Delamont (2016) describes it, it was a lust for knowing what happens behind closed doors which started ethnographic practice in educational research. What the early pioneering researchers found in the 1970s was that what was believed happened in the classroom, was not what in reality happens in the classroom. What was pioneering and probably was considered unethical as a mode of research in the 1970s (ibid.), is now considered standard practice and favoured by those who want to have a personal insight into the social context they want to research (ibid.).

Even though most of the quotes I use in this thesis come from discussions and interviews, I believe that I would not be able to get the insights I was able to get, if I was not immersed in the setting, both St Aber's and Mawerley. Therefore, I describe this as a case study informed primarily by ethnographic decisions and actions. For example, I believe my understanding of the data comes from the ability to move beyond the answers given and try to draw conclusions from the situation I observed and was part of. As Willis (1977: 3-4) describes it:

‘The ethnographic account, without always knowing how, can allow a degree of the activity, creativity and human agency within the object of study to come through into the analysis and the reader's experience. This is vital to my purposes where I view the cultural, not simply as a set of transferred internal structures (as in the usual notions of socialization) nor as the passive result of the action of dominant ideology downwards (as in certain kinds of Marxism), but at least in part as the product of collective human praxis.

My participants were no longer studied in isolation but were understood through their collectivity. I was never really good at quantitative methods, and I never really understood how people can be seen through tables and variables. I always thought it was bizarre how answers could be measured without ever meeting the respondents. I have always assumed that interactions between researchers and participants involve more than the text where the responses are written. The researcher can learn a lot by looking into the sounds, pace and other senses related to the space (Back 2007). Being part of the social context as a researcher, I believed that some of the answers could be connected to the social space around the participants and allow for deep understanding of how responses are shaped. Therefore, even though I had arranged interviews with students, most of my perceptions were shaped by sitting through classes and being part of the wider locality.

However, as Delamont (2002) points out the misconception that qualitative data collection is the easy option in social sciences is prevalent, but it is just that: a misconception. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the decisions which needed to be taken during conducting fieldwork and trying to make sense of the data were emotionally demanding and required physical and emotional investment. Engaging in an ethnographic study is even more demanding, as it can be very time-consuming and gaining access can be one of the most difficult stages of a doctorate degree. Schools with their strict timetables and overworked

teachers are hardly the best places to gain access. The advantages for them are rarely tangible, and seeing as the anonymity of the participants needs to be preserved, gatekeepers at such institutions do not always see how a research project will enhance the educational experience of their pupils. Trying to gain access to a private school is even more challenging, as from what I realised from my experience, private schools are not just selective with regards to who can study there, but also who can enter the school and ask questions. Therefore, the process of finding a school to research is draining and can demotivate a researcher a great amount even before the research commences. However, as my experience taught me, once the initial issues with access are negotiated, the research process can be tremendously rewarding both because of the insight it can provide and because of the rich data that can be gathered.

Although this study was conducted at a school, it does not look at educational and pedagogical practices as such. A lot of the data come from Open Days, incidents which happen in the wider locality or at other schools. Since deciding to study a school, I believed that the school could not be studied in isolation from the background of the pupils and other stimuli which might have shaped their ideas. Therefore, I tried to understand wider questions of class, race, ethnicity, and gender through everyday occurrences in the participants' lives.

Gaining and negotiating access

Gaining access was very challenging and it was the main reason why my project changed almost entirely. At the initial stages of my research, I was driven by questions of how national identities are constructed in schools. At the time, I aimed to conduct a comparative project between Greece and England, as I wanted to draw similarities and comparisons between the two countries which I believed were more common than what seemingly was the case. Having moved to London not very long ago, I found myself answering questions whether I felt Greek or Cypriot because of my background. People were taken aback when I

asked them the same about England and Britain. Being described as an immigrant also made me wonder whether images of the Other were constructed in similar ways in England, as in my own native countries. Even though initially I found a school in Greece, where the headteacher agreed to let me go to the school and talk to students and staff, the political situation at the time (2014/2015) meant that changes at the school had to be made and the headteacher changed schools. The school stayed without a headteacher for at least five months and there was no one there who had the authority to let me carry on with my project. I visited the school twice, mainly through a personal contact and even though the teachers seemed very keen on the idea, they could not help me further. I tried to contact other schools but because of the precarious position a lot of the headteachers had found themselves in they were not very open to the idea of letting me be in the school. One of the few headteachers who arranged to meet me advised that I look at the guidelines from the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious affairs as they might be able to help. Calling the Ministry, made me realise that the bureaucracy alone would take months and would be too expensive. Therefore, I decided that perhaps due to my own precarious financial situation, I would pursue my research in the UK alone and would try and gain greater insight into one setting, which could potentially form the basis of a wider project in the future.

While I was looking for a school in Greece, I was also trying to see what schools might be suitable in the UK. Initially, as I wanted a school which was largely homogenous in its cohort, to resemble the Greek schools, I looked at schools in the countryside, as this was almost impossible in inner-city schools. I believed, however, that selective schools in certain areas which are considered as white and middle class might offer a cohort which would resemble that of the school in Greece, ie. white, fairly affluent, and middle-class. I emailed all schools which had a sixth form and were relatively close to me, as this would allow me to travel there every day. Very few of them replied, mostly to decline,

and one said they would let me go in on day and have a focus group with students they would select.

Finally, I got a reply from St Aber's and an invitation to go to the school and explain my project. In our first meeting, Mr Jones, the Second Master, said that one of the reasons he let me go to the school was because he saw that I studied at Warwick University and since his son was studying there at the time, he thought he would try to help me. In the initial meeting, it was not entirely clear how many hours I would be allowed to spend at the school or how I would start interviewing students and observing what they were doing. As with most schools, Mr Jones seemed worried that students would be distracted from their classes if I was around for long periods of time. Therefore, we agreed to see how the project would develop and act accordingly. Initially, Mr Jones was more keen on me talking to the members of staff, perhaps believing that they would have more informed opinions. I saw the value of talking to adults but I was also very interested in seeing what the pupils would have to say, as they were the ones who would be in both the school as an institution and the outside world, forming ideas within both settings.

When I first approached Mr Jones and outlined my project, there was a greater focus on national identity; as I outlined above this is what had enticed me to doctorate studies. In retrospect, I think that Mr Jones only allowed me to commence my research because at the time they were preparing for an important inspection on measures they were taking to implement British Values at their school. I often thought that Mr Jones believed that having a PhD student at the school asking students about their national identity and their beliefs on British Values would tie in with their attempts to show the inspectors that they were taking the matter seriously. Questions of British Values and Britishness were central to my project, but as time passed I came to realise that they could not be understood and interpreted without being cognisant of wider social processes, since the intersectionality of societal concepts informs opinions on a broader level. Therefore, I started to enquire about wider concepts. This was also

informed by my increased understanding of the processes of a private school and middle-class decisions around schooling and lifestyle choices. Having not gone to school in the UK, it was only through this research that I fully understood the interplay of the various capitals through schooling and parental involvement. It was these relationships which slightly changed the focus of my research and why I came to include vignettes and interactions which occurred not only at St Aber's but in the wider locality. Moreover, it became evident through discussions and observations that it was difficult to discuss British Values or the school without commenting on wider practices; pupils and staff were conscious of the unique cohort of the school and were ready to comment on that. Therefore, even though unpacking the promotion of BV within the school was the main research question, interdisciplinary questions were also explored. I discuss below my ethical hesitations in exploring in some detail questions which were not discussed in advance with the participants; however, the ethnographic approach I adopted would not have been as rich if it were not for discussions which revolved around broader social issues and themes.

Even though gaining access to a school was very stressful and at times I thought I should abandon my plans for interviews and observations and do a focus group and a questionnaire, establishing connections within the school and rapport with the participants was much easier. Once I started going to the school both teachers and Mr Jones realised that I would try and make my presence as unobtrusive as possible. I would sit at the back of the classes, I would communicate my intent to visit classes days in advance, and I would make sure that the students would not feel that they had to stay behind in order to answer my questions. This made everyone more at ease with my presence there.

Collecting data

I was at the school from the beginning of the academic year in 2015, until almost the end of the academic year in 2016. Although I had arranged for interviews and observations in May of 2016, my research came to end abruptly because of a family emergency. I had to take a while out of the PhD and when I was ready to come back, it was summer, and the pupils had exams or had already finished school. For that academic year, there was no way for me to go back and I decided it was too complicated to go next year and try to establish new connections with staff and pupils, something which takes time and it was primarily for practical reasons (PhD completion time and renegotiating access for another year) that I felt my time at the school had been enough. In any case, when I started transcribing the data I realised that I had more data than I would ever be able to use.

The initial interviews were with members of staff as Mr Jones was less eager for me to interview pupils, their time being somewhat limited. As time progressed, however, I was given more freedoms as to who I would like to talk to. I could go in the classes and ask pupils whether they would give me some time at their preferred date and time. All the interviews were semi-structured: I would ask students some questions which were roughly exploring their beliefs of British Values, their school, their area and how they perceived their experience of the school. Different participants felt more strongly about different things so I did not try to force the conversation to follow a particular path. I was open to hearing what they had to say. For the interviews, I would sit in the Careers Office, which was relatively quiet and staff and students would come and see me there. If I was talking to a senior member of staff they had their own office, so I would see them in their office.

In total, I formally interviewed 13 members of staff, whose interviews were recorded and transcribed. In the appendix, I include the names of those who were interviewed and whose answers I included in the thesis (the one person whom I have not included is the former registrar). There were more staff who were willing to be interviewed but due to time restraints, we never managed to

find an appropriate time to arrange the interview. Alongside that, I had informal chats with many members of the school community: including teachers, those working in the canteen, the receptionist, and visitors who might be at the school. I include some of these conversations in my chapters. I used a combination of ways in order to remember the conversations: taking notes after having a discussion with someone or more frequently I would ask if it is okay if I used my phone to record what we were saying, while always informing them I was a PhD researcher, conducting a research project at the school. This meant that I could concentrate on the discussion rather than worrying about taking notes. When I did take notes, I did this immediately after going back to the desk I was using at the school during that particular day. Moreover, spending time at the staff room over breaks allowed me to gain insight into the life of the school and what perceptions the staff had. I found that these impromptu conversations were very insightful, this is why I included a number of such discussions in my chapters.

With regards to students, Mr Jones thought they could fill in a questionnaire² to answer my questions. We gave it to the prefects and they were to hand it out. Even though the prefects were very good at administering it to a lot of pupils, and I got back 35 questionnaires, I think the long open-ended questions and the time it would take to fill everything in meant that the students did not engage with many of the questions. I really did not get any information from the questionnaire and possibly the only reason I include it here is because it gave me detailed demographic data about some pupils. I, then, had to negotiate with Mr Jones and convince him that students would only talk to me if they felt they had the time, if they wanted to, and that I could recruit them, in order to save him time from trying to find the pupils around the school. We agreed on those terms and so, I was able to start talking to pupils. To begin with, the interviews with students were rather awkward. Mr Jones still felt that this would

² Appendix 2

take up their time, so he insisted I line them up during break times. So, the interviews were short and when they overrun the students who were queuing outside the office to talk to me would get a little fidgety, they would knock on the door or would try and go through the other door to see what is going on.

Initially, Mr Jones wanted to recruit the students himself. He chose prefects or other students he thought ‘had things to say’, perhaps meaning students who were more engaged in school matters, by being prefects or had high academic results. The issue with that was that some of them did not know me, as they were not in the classes I had been observing. Therefore, it took some time to try and explain who I was and also why they were summoned to talk to me about something they did not know what it involved. Therefore, as the weeks progressed and I was able to negotiate my role with Mr Jones, I managed to get control of who I was talking to and that mainly involved pupils whose classes I had been observing. The only students I actively sought out, who were not in the classes I observed, were Jeremy, the Headboy, Smita and Tariq: two of the few ethnic minority pupils at the schools. I believed Jeremy represented what the school stood for, and I wanted to know the experiences of Smita and Tariq, being non-white in such a white school. In total, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews – which lasted around an hour each - with pupils. In the appendix, I include 16 names as these were the ones whose voices I included in the chapters. Alongside that, I was talking to a number of pupils during breaks, or if they happened to be in the library (and seemed not to be doing any work) while I was there. However, these discussions mainly informed my contextual view of the school rather than forming the basis of any analysis. Moreover, I held 3 focus groups, of around an hour and a half each: two with the pupils from the History class (6 pupils) and one with the pupils from the Politics class (3 pupils). They consisted of the pupils I was observing in the classes, and some of the questions were drawn from discussions during class time. The focus groups took place during class time, as the teachers kindly gave me the space and time to explore further some of the issues that were raised in class. The focus groups gave me a better insight into

the pupils' perceptions, as I perceived their responses within a collective peer group to be somewhat different compared to being in front of an adult.

From the start of the research, I asked to observe and interview sixth formers. I believed that it is more interesting to talk to them, as they can give more substantiated responses and have more informed opinions. I decided to observe lower and upper sixth classes of History and Politics. I thought that the questions I wanted to ask students broadly fell under the themes which were covered in these subjects. Admittedly, if I were to interview pupils who, for example, were not doing Politics and did not discuss multiculturalism in class, their responses might have been different. I focused on 3 groups primarily: one upper sixth Politics, one lower sixth Politics (both with Mr Simons) and one of upper sixth History (with Mr Elliot). I also went to a number of History or Politics classes with Mr Adams. The latter was primarily because I wanted to interview some of the pupils who were in his groups and I wanted to make sure they knew who I was.

Apart from classes I went to Open Days, I attended assemblies, chapel services, meetings with student representatives of the different year groups, theatre productions, I was at the staff room when there were breaks, sometimes had lunch at the canteen, and would go to the sixth form centre. I asked to be involved at senior management meetings, where the direction of the school was discussed, but Mr Jones thought that probably Mr Anderson, the Head Master, would not be very happy about this. I was also keen to interview parents who already sent their children to St Aber's on a more in-depth level, as most parents I met were people I knew from my own social setting and I was not sure if their responses would be affected by that. As I discuss later this allowed some participants to share their beliefs but also meant that apart from me saying I am doing a PhD and this is why I am seeking responses, I could get their written consent. Mr Jones thought that the best person to approach in order to meet parents would be the Head of the St Aber's Parents Association, Mr McKenna.

I contacted him and we tried several times to arrange a meeting. However, Mr McKenna was a very successful businessman who travelled around the world on a weekly basis; therefore, it was impossible to find a day or a time to talk even on the phone. The only thing that I managed to get by way of response as to why he sent his children to the school was because of the pleasant environment at the school.

Unfortunately, not all the people who kindly gave me their time and their thoughts are included in this study. A lot of the opinions and thoughts some participants expressed are echoed in other quotes. I tried to choose quotes which would be representative of the discussions I was having with the various participants and I mainly included the voices of those whom I talked to a lot and I think felt comfortable enough to share their opinions with me.

However, as the main premise of this study is that it was not just the school which affected pupils' perceptions and habitual practices but the locality as a whole, there are other actors whose opinions I include. There are incidents which did not happen at the school, but in the wider area, and which I believe represented the locality in a symbolic manner.

After I had collected the data, there came a question of what to do with all the hours of interviews and notes from the field. Transcribing the data was a very lengthy process. I was trying to transcribe every single word that was in the interviews, something which proved almost impossible, as it was taking hours to transcribe even a few minutes. I fully transcribed 26 of the 33 formal interviews and some of the shorter recordings with mothers, who spoke to me during Open Days. However, transcribing the interviews in their entirety was taking up so much time that I then switched to transcribing the conversations which I had identified would form the basis of the analytical chapters. The way I decided to identify those themes was perhaps not the most orthodox one. Initially, I attempted to use NVivo as a tool of qualitative analysis. However, I

believed that having spent so much time at the school and seeing which questions would make the participants give excited responses or which topics would make them wince or pause for long periods of time, would be a better indicator for which themes would be the most important to cover in the thesis. Therefore, I consulted my field notes which included observations and interviews, which I had perceived as interesting and worth unpacking in some detail. Moreover, I listened to the interviews more than twice each and found words and phrases that were repeated, such as the fact that St Aber's was described again and again as 'tolerant' and 'welcoming' or that Mawerley was seen as a 'white bubble'. These common themes emerged as important not only when I was listening again to the interviews and reading through my notes; they also stayed with me for the duration of my research at the school.

I am still not sure whether there are different ideas in the data which I should have explored further, or if my methods of collecting data were appropriate. When I first started going to the school it felt as if I was doing nothing. However, as the days and weeks passed it felt natural being there and talking to people about their everydayness – it is this everydayness which I found most interesting and I hope I was able to represent accurately in this thesis.

My positionality as a researcher

It has always been my belief that knowledge is socially situated, so as social researchers we need to make specific mention to the location and contexts in which knowledge is produced (McCorkel & Meyers, 2003). Undeniably, no matter how unbiased we researchers claim to be it is often our background assumptions, based on our location, class, gender, and race, which will influence how we understand the knowledge which unfolds during our data collection. How we describe ourselves and how others describe us not only affects how other people see us in the field but also how we behave while we are there (ibid.).

Our identity is shaped through these traits and it changes based on the setting that we find ourselves in. For example, Khan (2011) who was an alumnus of the school he was researching and a teacher while doing the ethnography talks about his unique relationship with the pupils. Even though he was part of the school and had attended the school, his family did not have the same socioeconomic background as the majority of the pupils. McKenzie (2015) discussed the nuanced relationship with her participants. Even though she lived for years in the same working-class estate as the women she was trying to contact and she had had a lot of the same experiences as them, the fact that she left, went to university and was at the time working at one of the most prestigious universities in the UK, made her participants hesitant to open up to her.

Although during my time at the field, I felt that I was very different to my participants and did not share the same privileged experiences as them, it was one conversation with another PhD candidate at the university which made me realise my position and how I understood what the participants were sharing with me. Carli³, who identifies as a working-class woman, asked me one day if she can ask me a weird question, in relation to the school I was researching: *‘Do you think they let you in cos you look posh?’*. My initial reaction was *‘No, of course, I am not posh’*. I come from a very modest family background, where money was never in abundance. However, Carli’s comment made me realise that I had to understand better how I was positioning the participants vis-à-vis their social class and consequently, place myself within those boundaries. The demarcations with other social groups were formed through distinctions of class, whiteness, and other forms of capital. Only then did I realise that I was occupying an insider/outsider position within the school, which provided great insights and affected a lot of the choices I made, as I will discuss later. Identifying the ways which I might be perceived as ‘posh’ is not easy; as they are more salient than one might imagine. Reflecting on the processes which gave

³ The name remains the same, as she wanted me to include her real name.

me access to my field, I would suggest that there are a lot of factors which I have not realized at the time, but which probably ultimately gave me access.

Although at the time I attributed my access to the field as luck, I came to realize that there were some underlying complexities to my perceived luck. Prior to contacting St Aber's, I also contacted state schools, as I mentioned above. However, it was only the private school which thought that a PhD student was a valued addition to the everydayness of the school: perhaps I could provide them with insights they would find beneficial. What I initially attributed to luck might well have been that only a private school would feel that someone of a certain socioeconomic background -white, middle class, highly educated -would be able to relate to their students. Spending time at the school, I came to realize that the students shared a lot of my interests: we read similar newspapers, watched similar TV programmes, shared political ideas. In summary, I came to think that we had common cultural capitals. Capitals which were ultimately cultivated through their families but which were also fostered at the school. At times I was questioning whether my questions on political affiliations and understating of current affairs would be answered in such an erudite manner by pupils at state schools. Describing then my experience being given access to conduct an ethnography in a school, I would say that it was based on convenience: the school felt that the pupils would be able to answer my questions, and by extension, build on their cultural capital. I, on the other hand, was at ease communicating with those who were similar to me. This last point did not come without its negative implications: it felt very often as if looking at oneself in the mirror, and wondering whether ideas become all-encompassing based on one's social milieu, one I could be considered part of.

All the preconceptions I had did not allow me to go to the field a *tabula rasa* (Burawoy, 1998) and yet, I am not sure whether these preconceptions reflected my own knowledge of how the locale worked or whether they were reflective of what I was observing. Moreover, I was anticipating certain

situations and responses to be given. I was almost expecting to be critical of the white privileged teenagers who had all the opportunities given to them or the parents who chose private education. I was reminded of Back (2002), for example, who talks about his preconceptions before meeting Nick Griffin, a prominent member of the BNP, seeing as his own views were in direct contrast with his. I, in my turn, pre-ascribed certain normative behaviours to my participants and expected that they would act according to these. This is why Burawoy (1998) warns that data need to be collected not based on what the participants 'ought to do' but what they are actually doing.

As Delamont (2016:16) notes "The 'political' feasibility of a research project is mostly about the possibility of access" and yet, the possibility of access is largely dependent upon the positionality of the researcher. I had brought my preconceptions to the field while not really acknowledging that I, too, lived in the same locale I was criticising, I was also white and probably based on my qualifications and lifestyle choices I was considered one of 'us'. Reflecting back on the participants' ideas, I believe the discussion I had with Camilla, in the chapter about class is reflective of that. The fact that Camilla shared her extreme ideas about working class people was only because she felt that the fact I looked like her and shared common interests, would by default almost, place me at the same social positioning as her, and I was assumed to be accepting of those remarks. This interaction was suggestive of a shared understanding, was a harbinger of similar confessions by parents at the school. My positionality in the field, therefore, was instrumental in how the participants related to me. It became apparent that my own subjectivity was what made the participants feel comfortable in discussing certain issues with me; I resembled them, I was one of them. I often wondered why participants would talk to me so openly if they did not see me as part of their own social circle.

McCorkel & Meyers (2003) note how in-depth research usually involves a lot of subjectivity. This demands from researchers to be able to disclose both the context of justification and the context of discovery by describing how their background assumptions and beliefs shape the knowledge production (ibid.). I noticed how I needed to allow others to scrutinise what I was assuming about my participants or my own actions while in the wider locale, rather than only scrutinise my participants. While presenting my work at academic conferences, I often felt that I was criticising the same positions I was representing: a white, middle-class 'poshness'. Throughout my study, I was aware that probably I was allowed in the school because of that and I always tried to be reflective of what I was seeing and how I was interpreting what the participants were saying.

However, as Burawoy (1998) warns reflexivity can be one of the enemies of social science. By employing reflexivity, we tend to self-monitor so much that it can lead to a state of irrevocable uncertainty. This can make us less able to analyse in a way that will go beyond what we already possess as knowledge. It can make us fall into 'the mire of infinite regress of excessive self-analysis and deconstructions' when it is so challenging in itself to even assume that we can pin down intersubjective understandings (Finlay: 2002: 212). Throughout my research, I often questioned how objective I was while talking to the participants. By thinking of stereotypes of what middle class pupils might do (eg. apply to Oxbridge, go on gap years, etc.) it was difficult to escape them. It required great effort to ask questions which were not going to give me the answers I was expecting from them; questions which were open and allow my participants to talk more freely about their experiences and construct their own life stories without much prompting from me. For example, whereas at the beginning I might have started with 'I understand St Aber's is a welcoming school, do you want to talk to me about that? I quickly realised I had to change my question to 'Do you want to describe the school to me?'

As discussed above, I believe my own social positioning allowed me access to the file and the participants. Moreover, I would suggest that gender in ethnography can play an important role in the process of collecting data. As discussed above, it does not only potentially help with gaining access but can also be vital in how comfortable some participants feel with you. Pandeli (2015) discusses how her participants, inmates in a prison, felt more comfortable with her and were willing to share their personal experiences more easily because she appeared as less threatening, compared to a white older male researcher, for example. This was helpful, in my case, because I found that mothers at Open Days would talk to me as if I was one of them. I assumed it was the fact that I was a woman, but I always felt uncertain whether they would truly open up, mainly because I was not a mother myself and could not really understand their worries about finding a school.

Moreover, the fact that I lived in the area both allowed me to see the pupils in some contexts outside the school and see how they behaved in other circumstances. For example, I bumped into some of them at my local pub, shortly after they had finished their exams. Or I saw them on my way to school in the mornings. Being involved in social activities, such as yoga, exercise classes and going to the various cafes in the area, where I was doing my reading and writing, also gave me the opportunity to meet some of the parents, prospective and current, on a more personal level.

Throughout my fieldwork, I tried to not be deterministic about the social class and the whiteness of the participants and how this affected their responses or actions; however, the affluence of the pupils and the social positions they occupied made it difficult to ignore how class and whiteness could be determining factors in their positions. However, I always felt that participants tried to distance themselves from their privileged positions and kept referring to ideas of openness and tolerance as central to their subjectivities, as opposed to their being middle-class or white. As Ahmed (2004: 39) notes:

Borders materialize as an effect of intensifications of feeling. The skin is, after all, a border that feels. To discuss the collective as 'having' a skin is not to posit the collective body as being 'like' the individual body. Rather, it is to suggest that individual and collective bodies surface through the very orientations we take to objects and others. [...] The impressions we have of others, and the impressions left by others are shaped by histories that stick, at the same time as they generate the surfaces and boundaries that allow bodies to appear in the present.

Both the impressions that I had of my participants, and possibly the impressions they had of me and those they were commenting on did not only appear contextually but were historically imprinted. Therefore, although I never claimed that the interpretations I was giving to what I saw or heard were representative of those who might happen to have similar demographic characteristics, I could neither claim that all my interpretations have been objective. I came to the field with historical narratives which informed my understandings of social inequalities and privilege. Therefore, I could not help but feel critical of what was said.

Although I felt at times that I should be saying that some of my impressions of the school were somewhat negative, I did not want to jeopardise my good relationship with the gatekeeper and risk not being able to go back to the school. So, throughout my stay there I always showed great interest in what they were doing, without once criticising the school or the actors within it. I often worried about treating participants as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves (Murphy and Dingwall 2008). The question of 'whose side am I on' often made me rethink how I was engaging with the participants. As Voysey (1975: 61) warns there is the danger that the elites can be presented as 'cardboard cutouts who are either misguided or wilfully putting their own interests first'.

Again then, I was confronted with my own prejudices and social positioning. James (2015) reflects on the research team for a study they conducted with affluent, middle class people. As he points out ‘many of the research team were white, urban-dwelling, middle-class. Researching the white middle-classes was like holding a mirror to the self. We were confronted with our culpability, failings, conceits and self-deceptions’ (ibid.: 106). This passage pertinently describes my own hesitations about my role in the field. ‘How can I criticise someone who has the disposable income for yoga classes when I do the same? I often thought’.

Berry (2015:17) talks about her own privilege growing up as a white person in a primarily white affluent borough of Canada, and challenges how whiteness acts as a mode of erasure:

‘Whiteness as invisible coincides with postmodern and post-structural notions of erasure. Derived from Derrida’s methods of deconstruction, erasure is the removal of truths and knowledge garnered from the margins or the silenced. Used mainly as a deconstruction of text, erasure is applicable to the multiple locations of Whiteness in education’.

Similar to Berry, I often wondered how I could be judging the single-mindedness of the white, hegemonic curriculum being taught at the school, while I have been taught the same things, growing up in an well-off white area of Cyprus. I often grimaced at how the Other was erased from discussions of colonialism; however, the national focused curriculum of my country, never allowed in any discussions of the Other either. Barry also discussed how her positionality as a white was reinforced through her privileged access to community sports, clubs, rituals, and other associations which are only available to certain groups of people, ie. white and middle class. Likewise, I spent many afternoons going to piano lessons, learning languages, and trying out different extra-curricular activities, most of them paid for by my parents. Moreover, a number of the participants who talked

to me were people had met in Mawerley, in settings which I often criticised, ie. a gym club or my yoga studio. In a sense, I was part of this white hegemonic group I was analysing.

Concerns and ethical dilemmas

Throughout my time both collecting data and analysing them, I always had the quote by Back and Ware in mind, as finding the balance between what was said and what the researcher sees and interprets as the truth was always difficult:

Ethnographers are like tricksters who promise not to lie, but on the other hand never tell the whole truth. [...] their rhetoric of absolute truth both empowers and subverts the message (2002: 41).

Doing an ethnographic case study, it is difficult to know where the boundaries of the research lie. It can be difficult to realise when the participants tell you stories because they see you as one of them, or as part of answering formal questions. How these differences are perceived is mainly to do with the location and the structural position that we occupy within them (McCorkel & Meyers, 2003). I felt that pupils were always very keen to talk to me, polite and enthusiastic when it came to answering questions. Some of them showed a keen interest and would stay even after the interview had finished to ask more questions about my project, or for advice for their prospective university studies. Often, however, I felt that a lot of them were only answering my questions and were agreeing to spend an hour of their free time doing an interview with me because I was in a position of power. They knew that my main contact at the school was Mr Jones, the Second Master. They had seen me walk in the corridors with him, he had called them into his office to tell them that they should probably agree to do this, we had walked into classrooms together, while they were having a lesson, to ask students to come out and meet me. Therefore, most of them probably realised that it would be to their best interest to cooperate, if they did not want to be perceived negatively by Mr Jones. I had to establish a different

position, one that would not make my research look as a formal interview process, and this is why I negotiated with Mr Jones and changed the way that I would ask for pupils to participate. It was mostly through my contact with them rather than his gentle coercion.

On the other hand, however, I was also surprised to see how these positions of power were working in a different manner from the one I had guessed. I was surprised to see how confident the pupils felt talking to an adult and how they were able to talk to me as their equal. I quickly realised that this confidence was the direct result of private education, one I did not have myself, and the attributes such schools encourage and develop in students. Despite doing a PhD, at times I felt like an imposter both with regards to my academic qualifications and my social positioning. English is not my first language and I have an accent; the pupils and senior staff on the other hand, were all erudite to say the least. Also, being a migrant myself (despite one from a former white colony) made me feel uncomfortable when people were talking about all the immigrants coming to the country and seeking work. I was one of these ‘immigrants’; I had come to study and decided to stay. Was I one of the people who were draining the resources of the public service then, as depicted in the media? In chapter on Race I analyse they viewed me as a different kind of immigrant, perhaps the ‘good’ kind. Also, even though I lived in the area that I studied, and people might have assumed that I had the same financial background, I lived in the same flat for four years and have been lucky not to have a rent increase in all these years. Therefore, a lot of the times I was quite shocked by the lifestyle choices of the pupils and their families; and even felt resentment towards the spending of money in such a way.

When discussing ethnography and reflexivity it is difficult not to talk about emotions and how they developed while in the field. To strip any qualitative research off all emotion is almost impossible. By embedding one’s self to the field, emotions can become overwhelming. When conducting an

ethnographic case study project, it is almost impossible not to develop likes, dislikes or friendships with participants. While trying to maintain a professional relationship and maintain the role of the impersonal researcher, I realised it was often difficult to maintain this balance. I was trying to immerse myself in the setting but at the same time I did not want personal relationships to interfere with what I was doing at the field. Before going to the field, I was negatively prejudiced about how the pupils' habitus and their socioeconomic position would affect their personality.

Admittedly as I spent more time at the field, I came to realise that a lot of their views at times represented mine – perhaps as I became more close to my participants I became more sympathetic to their everydayness. Khan (2011: 198), who studied St Paul's, one of the most elite schools in the US, observed that:

‘[a]s the languages of race, gender, and class are increasingly framed as academic liberal pandering or as old social categories whose usefulness has run their course, students begin to lose the tools to make sense of their experience, and challenging durable inequalities becomes more and more difficult. Not only does the success of some become naturalized, but the failure of others becomes internalized’.

As I was reading through my data and was deciding what themes were prominent in my observations and interviews, I came to realise that I had become neutral to some of the views my participants were expressing; I could almost see their point of view. Jeremy was probably the one pupil whose views were most in opposition to mine; the first time I talked to him I was almost grimacing when he was expressing some views. As weeks went by, however, I could see ‘where he was coming from’.

Towards the end, I felt increasingly torn between my need to be perceived as critical of their privilege and my own personhood as someone who

did not want to seem that I was criticizing the people who shared their opinions with me. I am not sure whether this was because I felt that our similarities were more than our differences – I lived in the total locality I was describing after all – or because I genuinely did not want to be ungrateful. While trying to make sense of it all, it occurred to me that being an insider was beneficial and perhaps the debatable position I occupied was what allowed me to reflect more critically on some of the data.

In retrospect, this study had an emotional impact but there were also practical issues which needed to be addressed. Spending so many hours at the school was physically exhausting. It was not only the fact that I had to be physically present in different classes, or trying to see things which I did not know if they were there or not. There was also the fact that all of the pupils were under 18. Therefore, I had to do a DBS check and then gave out a document outlining my work to the students, which they could pass on to their parents and if they had any questions or they wanted their child to withdraw they could do so immediately. Mr Jones and I also contacted the Head of the Parents' Association and asked him if he believed that the project would make parents worried about their children's progress. None of the parents, nor pupils expressed any concerns or asked not to participate.

Admittedly, even though the participants had signed a consent form it was always difficult to ensure that what they had signed was still what was happening in the field. As Etherington (2007) points out it is difficult to expect participants to give informed consent and know exactly what it is they are agreeing to. The researcher will give broad information about what the intentions of the research are but, but most processes are yet to unfold. A lot of the questions and purposes shape as the research progresses. When drafting a research proposal, without having been in the field, it is difficult to predict what path the study will take. The interactions and intersubjectivities between the researcher and the participants change continually and are very much context

specific – the context in itself being volatile and shaped by wider social, political, and economic events. To try and ameliorate this, all the participants were given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any point, but before the data was transcribed which was over the summer of 2016. The most important consideration was ensuring that the reputation of the school would not be harmed in any way and therefore, all participants had been given pseudonyms and there has been considerable amount of effort in making sure that readers will not be able to identify the school from references in the data.

Another consideration was the fact that a lot of the people who gave their voice in the study did not sign a form of consent as I described events which happened in the street, at Open Days, etc. I always mentioned I was doing a PhD to those I interacted with and I explained what my study was about. Again, I tried to ensure anonymity and I believe I treat a lot of the events and responses as representative of wider attitudes I believe exist. Therefore, I do not attribute specific ideas to specific people as such. The incident on the bus, for example, is something to my opinion, could have been instigated by a different white, middle-class woman. I still remain aware and conscious of the fact that these people did not agree to be portrayed in this study; however, I believe that it would be almost impossible to have a deeper understanding of my participants, had I not observed the wider locality and broader social occurrences.

The everyday as unit of analysis

As Back (2015: 820) argues studying everyday life is valuable. It can prompt sociologists to ‘attend to the routine and temporal aspects of social life. The ‘everyday’ brings the seasons of society into view. It also brings to the fore how liveable lives are made in the midst of the social damage produced by widening class divisions’. For example, taking the bus might seem so commonplace that is not worth examining; however, it is everyday occurrences such as this which can shape localities and attribute meaning to actions.

Pink (2012) notes how ethnographic research brings the emphasis of everyday practices into the forefront of the research. Such practices, then, become units of analysis and they make us think about the intersections of everyday occurrences, which might include materiality, sociality or the weather (ibid.). Sztompka notes how many things one can see in everyday life, if they just look around:

‘One may not directly observe macro-objects, social classes, states, institutions or nations. One also may not be able to directly observe micro-meanings, motivations, intentions of human actions. At the level of everyday life, though, there is a whole ‘spectrum of visibility’. At one end there are the spontaneous, but culturally tainted gestures, body language, [...] At the other pole, there are the various images purposefully created to convey some meaning or message: billboards, commercials, In between, we find purposeful stylizations of the people, ‘self-presentations’ aimed to convey some information about themselves and their status’ (2008: 4,5).

Throughout the thesis I allude to the fact that some interpretations of quotes are what I felt or assumed; my implication being that some gestures and meaning are culturally ascribed as mentioned above. Moreover, the way St Aber’s and Mawerley have come to be described as white middle-class bubbles, alludes to the fact that everyday practices are different compared to more diverse neighborhoods and schools. A lot of routine and mundane actions can carry a lot of meaning through social relations and practices, as Neal & Murji write:

everyday life-approaches attempt to capture and recognize the mundane, the routines in (and of) social relations and practices. In doing so, they not only give importance to the ordinary, and take the ordinary seriously as a category of analysis, but they also evidence how everyday life social relations, experiences and practices are

always more than simply or straightforwardly mundane, ordinary and routine', by paying attention both at 'big' moments, which are more interestingly seen through the 'small' (2015: 811-812).

Highmore (2002) uses the example of Doyle and his stories of Sherlock Holmes to describe how the deepest of truths can be found in the everyday practices. 'The non-everyday (the exceptional) is there to be found in the heart of the everyday. Indeed, many of the Sherlock Holmes stories start with what seem to be ordinary, petty occurrences that hardly warrant the attention of the great detective. But for Holmes the everyday is not what it seems. (ibid.:3).

In all the chapters, I will draw from everyday occurrences and discussion I have had not only through formal interviews but from the everyday life of the school and incidents which occurred while I was collecting the data. I believe the quotes above demonstrate how it is important to look beyond the demarcated confines of institutions and look for answers outside the gates of the 'school'. In the chapters which follow, I will try to demonstrate that the perceptions and beliefs of pupils transcend the limits of the school and how we understand these perceptions can only be understood through looking at the wider social setting which these pupils live their everyday lives.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to showcase the reasons which made me decide to embark on this project, as it has transformed over the years. The ubiquity of opportunities to collect data has been discussed both as a great prospect but also as a way of creating subjective interpretations of the data and the incidents which made their way to the thesis. I have explained the difficulties of gaining access to an institution and how negotiating one's position posed its own unique challenges. I examined my own positionality as a white, middle-class researcher and discussed the danger of looking at the data through this lens. Through the analysis of the concerns and dilemmas I discussed, I also placed the everyday of

the social lives of the participants at the forefront of what shaped their subjectivities. I will now move on to analyse my interactions with the participants, starting with an in-depth analysis of the school, where co-curricular activities move beyond the confines of the school to co-construct along with the wider locality a bubble of white privilege.

Chapter Four

Building Character and Creating Well-Rounded Individuals

This chapter primarily focuses on describing the workings of the school in some detail. The changes which had occurred in Mawerely in the past decade, from the early 2000s to the mid 2010s, brought pronounced changes to St Aber's, which were visible in the time I was there, in 2015-16. The school had seen a significant change in both its cohort and its ethos. Both of these changes will be discussed in the chapter, from the perspective of the pupils, staff and the Head Master, who I argue has been the driving force behind the changes. With a pronounced emphasis on co-curricular activities, St Aber's educates pupils not

only to pass exams but to become high-achieving members of the market force. There is great emphasis given on fostering character characteristics which are seen as instrumental in the success of individuals, transcending the ability to pass exams. I look in some detail how this is achieved, and how during the process of creating well-rounded individuals, exclusive pockets are being created. This privileged schooling makes St Aber's and Mawerley a bubble of whiteness and privilege, an issue which is discussed and contested by the participants, who through their liberal views feel a moral obligation to distance themselves from such a depiction.

A strategic approach to education

Securing the best school for one's child can be a very stressful time. As pupils and parents will describe in this and later chapters, the options are limitless but at the same time very limited. A balance needs to be found between good academic results, the facilities for extra-curricular activities and a positive environment in the school. St Aber's has chosen to stress one of these elements as their main 'marketing' strategy: the ability to create well-rounded individuals. Attending Open Days at the school, I noticed that Mr Anderson was repeating the same sentences during all of them:

We are not trying to be an academic powerhouse,
there are many schools which do this very well,
we are doing something different here,
we are trying to create well-rounded pupils.
It is very much in our DNA to select pupils
who will have a well-rounded personality.

Therefore, it became apparent that the concept of well-rounded individuals and the idea that other skills, not only academic, needed to be developed, was one of the main features at the heart of the ethos of St Aber's. This chapter will examine

what practices the school employed to ensure that pupils developed qualities which were both normative and highly valued in the competitive educational and economic context of the 21st century. It will argue that through the mission of one man, the Head Master, the school changed considerably in the last decade (prior to 2016) and despite some criticism from those who have experienced the change - with regards to the unwilling exclusion of certain groups from the school - soft skills, such as confidence, tolerance, well-roundedness, which the school promoted had made it a very desirable school. Such qualities were valued not only by the school but by the general locality more generally, as the parents valued an education which constructed well-rounded individuals. Therefore, even though the school was also advancing academically, the emphasis was placed largely on their successful attempts to create people prepared for the world after school. The chapter will aim to draw parallels between the rhetoric of the school and how this was reflected in the demographics of the locality: parents who had made their money through hard work, rather than family inheritance, and believed in the power of persistence and confidence, often sidelining the academic pursuits. In the search for a well-rounded education both parents and pupils criticised high pressured education and embraced what St Aber's represented: a welcoming school with an emphasis on co-curricular activities. However, this did not come without its criticism as St Aber's represented a very narrow sample of the wider community: white, middle-class and mainly affluent. Therefore, questions of privilege arose and were contrasted with the welcoming narrative promoted by the school.

The need to secure the best possibly education for one's child has acquired great importance as parents increasingly understand that if they want their children to succeed and progress in life, both in economic and academic terms, they need to equip them with certain tools while young, a time which can be formative for their later lives. As mentioned earlier, this drives them to a search for schools which can offer both academic and soft skills. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001) point out, however, the narrative around this is not

vocabulary which will seem connected to competition. This new planetary-vulgate, as they define it, is absent of words such as ‘class’, ‘domination’, ‘inequality’, ‘exploitation’. Instead, they have been replaced by more subtle and conspicuous words, such as ‘flexibility’, ‘employability’ ‘multiculturalism’, ‘governance’ (ibid.). Therefore, this chapter will discuss how St Aber’s, the parents, and the pupils engage with these concepts as tools for personal betterment and equipping themselves with tools needed to succeed in a neoliberal market. Reay (2015: 15) describes this as: ‘The hegemony of neo-liberalism and the dominance of free market globalisation have created ever more pressure to construct independent, autonomous, entrepreneurial identities that repudiate the vulnerable and needy parts of the self’. Schooling and the wider social background can in a sense be used to develop a global cosmopolitan imaginary (Rizvi 2005), which gives easier access to global positions in the international labour market, unlike the financially inferior peers (Findlay et al. 2006; Findlay et al. 2012). Bauman (1998: 86) suggests that we are all ‘doomed to the life of choices, but not all of us have the means to be choosers’.

Neoliberal governments tend to acquiesce responsibility onto individuals with regards to their welfare – with perhaps the most prominent example being Thatcher’s words ‘There is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families’ – the individual is required to take more active responsibility for their own actions. Parents who are professionally and market-savvy are aware that the one of the best routes to ensure a prosperous future for their offspring is through education. Therefore, schools which can offer a broader education become more competitive and coveted. There is an increasing need to ensure that they ‘create the competitive, instrumentally rational individual who can compete in the marketplace’ (Hursh 2005). Modern parents, tend to be aware of anxiety in teenagers and the effects this can have on their mental health. As a result, they increasingly value schools which can provide their children with the necessary skills which will enable them to become ‘economically productive members of society’ (ibid.:5), while safeguarding their pastoral care. These skills are not

always directly related with the ability to pass exams but require a broader understanding of how to present oneself in social situations. Goffman (1959 [1982]: 17,18) described this ability as one's awareness of presenting oneself in an appropriate manner in a number of contexts, as the idea of habitus would suggest:

Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain. Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case. Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular response [...]. Sometimes the traditions of an individual's role will lead him to give a well-designed impression of a particular kind and yet he may be neither consciously nor unconsciously disposed to create such an impression.

One of the most prominent theories, which has acquired popularity among educationalists is Duckworth's (2016) belief that grit, the combination and sustained motivation to achieve one's goal, can be a powerful tool in one's success. Children's development and success, according to Duckworth's study can come not only from learning how to retain information and pass exams but also developing abilities such as persistence, self-control, and self-confidence, or the ability to make an impression on others and present themselves in ways which represent their group. All of these qualities, which can be summarised as metacognitive skills, are the platform to character education. Schools which strive to create initiatives to help develop such traits are oftentimes more sought-after compared to academic hothouses. Duckworth also asserts that children who

participate in extracurricular activities perform a lot better academically, are more self-reliant and less likely to engage in delinquent behaviour. However, not all schools can afford to promote such skills, nor all schools have the financial means to invest in the facilities required for a wide range for extracurricular activities. For example, it has been argued that state schools give extra-curricular activities second position and teachers have little freedom to experiment with concepts such as grit or soft skills (educationengland.org.uk, 2016). It is often the lack of physical resources or the lack of time which create constraints or the fact that the curriculum needs to be followed more closely compared to private schools which have more freedoms. This neoliberal approach sees human capital as an economic return from educational investment; parents realise that paying for this kind of education will have economic benefits for their children; despite their anxieties about contributing to the 'public good' (McGregor 2009: 351).

Schools which are able to promote these kinds of capabilities have been on demand and their trajectory looks very promising in the near future, as the case of St Aber's suggests. St Aber's has actively been trying to market itself along these lines. By visiting the website, the Welcome video by the Head Master, which is less than two minutes long, focuses primarily on pupils in the sports fields, playing musical instruments, showcasing the great facilities of the school. In these two minutes the Head Master is mainly trying to portray what seems to be of importance to the school. This very prominently entails the idea that the school is trying to create well-rounded pupils, extending beyond the ability to pass exams. As the Head Master stresses, despite the school being highly academic, they aim to foster essential life skills and prepare pupils for later in life. There is a strong belief that you can get as much out of being on stage or during sports as you do in the classroom. Academic and co-curricular are not two separate things but they are seamless and integrated. This is why on several occasions when I mistakenly referred to them as extra-curricular I was corrected by both staff and pupils. These co-curricular pursuits aim to foster

dedication, teamwork, reliability, motivation and teamwork. As the Head Master continues in his welcome note, the pupils are characterised by a '*can-do approach, we can do this, we can do that. There is very little we cannot do this; we cannot do that*'.

The rhetoric used by the Headmaster often resembled the language used in the highly competitive labour force market. These attributes of leadership and cooperation and the can-do attitude which employers value so highly these days, is of high significance at St Aber's. To prove that this is preparation for later in life the Head Master, along with members of the senior and admissions teams, interview each one of the pupils who apply to the school. Each year they will end up interviewing one to two thousand pupils, as the Head Master informed me, despite this being a very time-consuming process. However, for St Aber's it is not only important to be able to pass the exam but also to have the ability to present yourself and defend your ability to be part of a prestigious school in front of a number of people, who probably look very daunting, for someone who is at the age of 10. Similarly, those who apply to become prefects go through an interview with Mr Anderson; showing again, that wanting the 'top job', as he described it, means that you must be able to go through a rigorous interview process.

Changes in the area bring changes to the school

The majority of the staff stressed the fact that the school had changed considerably because of the vision the Head Master had for the school; without saying whether this is positive or negative, they admit that the school now largely represented the socioeconomic background that the Head Master came from: affluent, white, and middle class. This change over the last ten years, both of the school and Mawerley, was a recurring theme in my discussions with pupils and staff. A large number of staff who had been at the school for a number of years

suggested that when they first joined, the school was not a pleasant school to work in. As the Director of Studies, Mr Evans, noted:

I was surprised when I arrived here about the level of expectations from the staff on the pupils. I think the expectations of the kids was lower than it should have been. Part of that reason was that, I think, the standard behaviour was nowhere near as it is now. So, I think a number of staff were spending more time trying to bring discipline and less time teaching.

When I first started, the school was rough. It was a rough school. And it was very mixed. Of course, now it is an easy school to teach in. I don't know whether it will change [...] I just remember that at the time it was rough. So, it wasn't a school I enjoyed teaching to start with.

Implicitly, Mr Evans almost suggests that the changing cohort of students has resulted in better results, a better environment and has turned the school into the successful institution it is today. The fact that the school is described as rough was interesting. Issues of discipline or lower academic results acquire a very nuanced interpretation as the blame is attributed almost mostly to pupils. It is interesting that the fact that this used to be a boys' school until the 1990s was not mentioned. To my mind, a school full of adolescent boys can be a challenging environment to teach in. Instead, there was an implicit suggestion that perhaps the fact that the school now attracts middle-class, white pupils is positive for the school. A similar idea of well-behaved pupils resulting from socioeconomic background seemed to be shared by the students. During a focus group with Upper Sixth pupils, from a History class, I asked students if they believed their experience at the school was somewhat different to state schools.

Alex: It is not guaranteed but there is up to a certain point the stereotype that people who go to private schools are sort of more polite, sort of more mannered, maybe more respectful in a way, but it is not guaranteed.

George: This is a stereotype.

Alex: I know I sound really bad.

As the participants in the focus group laughed nervously, I felt that even though this was a stereotype, most of them nodded in agreement. Even though good behaviour among certain people was criticised as a stereotype, it could be argued that stereotypes can be ingrained in everyday understandings and influence which behaviours people value as more constructive. Even the fact that Alex mentioned that he sounded bad, showed that perhaps he did not in reality feel bad but maybe expressing this idea was not acceptable. The discussion continued with my prompting the participants to elaborate on what Alex said.

Emily: I think it has a lot more to do with upbringing.

George: Yeah, it's not the school that made us. It's the class that we come from.

Henry: There is a lot of respect between pupils and teachers which you may not find at state schools. Then this means that you are polite to your teachers naturally, because you respect what they do.

The idea that family and social background are at the foreground of what shapes one's outlook was mentioned throughout my interviews with pupils. It was perhaps this upbringing, affluent and white, which had the potential to pathologise those who were different; and had for example, created the image of

the private school as a place for respectful behaviour whereas state schools were more likely to perpetuate unruly behaviour. The fact that the pupils did not consider the school to be the cradle underpinning their behaviours and ideas reinforces the main focus of this study, the idea that total locales: family, school, and locality, all mirroring each other can be seminal in the construction of identities.

An example which can showcase how pupils at St Aber's can be contrasted with those from a different upbringing comes from the fact that the majority of them had to engage with school activities not only until very late in the day but also at the weekend (Open Days, prefect meetings, practicing sports or doing rehearsals, etc.). Pupils saw that as normal and none of them expressed complaints about the hours they had to spend engaged in activities. It might have been the appeal that being involved in various activities can enhance one's CV, which was enough to provide motivation and convince them to sacrifice their free time in favour of school activities. Harry one of the prefects, for example, during an Open Day on a Saturday, described it as a privilege to be there rather than complain about his being at the school at the weekend. Contrastingly, Nayak (2003) talks about the *Charvers*, the name given to young people in the North West of England, a group of kids living in poverty and prone to criminal activities. They described the freedoms they were given from their parents, giving examples of how their parents would give them alcohol and cigarettes. They were taking pride in this and this talk allowed them to show their toughness, despite their young age. Even though they had to legally attend school, scholastic aspiration was not in their agenda. Therefore, their freedoms were categorised as the wrong kinds of liberties; liberties which would not lead to what is perceived as normative professional or academic success. For instance, they would not be able to capitalise on any of their activities that they associated with being free. As Nayak (ibid.: 89) describes it 'many of these activities were viewed as "beyond the pale" of accepted behaviour [...] and so compounded *Charver* status as inhuman, far from innocent, "not-quite-white".

These experiences demonstrate the double-edged nature of the “freedoms” and “liberties” available to them and the freedoms and restrictions imposed on St Aber’s pupils.

Emphasis on co-curricular

Mr Anderson was the Headmaster of St Aber’s for a little more than 10 years, when I started my project. I believe it is important to describe in some length my encounter with him because he has been instrumental in the changing nature of the school and what St Aber’s represents presently. The year I was at the school was his penultimate year there, and as he said it was almost a time for reflection on what the school has achieved. He was privately educated, an Oxbridge graduate, an upper middle-class man in his early 50s, who had a good grasp of how to make a business successful. Students never got to know him that well, since he was rarely directly involved with them. This struck me as somehow impersonal and also reminded me of a business where the CEO is there to make business decisions rather than have a knowledge on everyday matters. He was identified by most members of staff and pupils as the one primarily responsible for the transformation of St Aber’s. Living in Mawerley for a number of years myself, I would describe the transformation of St Aber’s as concurrent with the changes in the wider area. I would suggest that Mr Anderson saw the potential in changing how the school was operating to attract the middle-class professionals who were rapidly becoming the majority in the surrounding areas, rather than him deciding to change the school prior to the wider changes. It could be said that he saw the gap in the market: a lack of suitable state secondary schools, apart from the selective or faith ones, which were very competitive, while there was an influx of money in the area.

It took a long time for me to arrange to meet him, so I was acquainted with the school fairly well by the time it was time for me to have an interview

with him. The usual routine was for me to go to the reception upon arrival and sign in. Helen, the woman at the reception, would not always acknowledge that I was there as at times when there were too many people. In the mornings, I would be given a Visitor's lanyard, along with a polite 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' when it was time for me to go. On days that I had to go to Mr Jones' office, I would ask Helen to call him to see if he was free, and she would do so in a very polite manner, but our exchanges were often very limited.

However, the day I was meeting the Head Master was very different. When I arrived, Helen took me to the waiting room, asked me if I wanted anything to drink and told me to wait there, someone would soon come to take me to the Headmaster's office. I had been in that room a couple of times, during my first visits to the school. When I still did not know my way around or had to wait for different administrative staff while I had to sign paperwork to be allowed access to the school. I only waited there for a couple of minutes before Mary, the Headmaster's secretary, informed me that Mr Anderson was ready to see me. As Mr Jones had already informed me, Mr Anderson was a very personable man, so he believed he would be great for an interview; as long as the questions were not too difficult to answer. I did not quite understand what this meant, but I assumed it might link to what I discussed in Chapter Two, that oftentimes people distance themselves from certain labels as they might feel uncomfortable about some of their privileges or class status. I was never sure whether Mr Jones liked me being at the school; I always felt that he was suspicious of my work. Perhaps he only wanted to ensure that I would not portray the school in a negative way.

Going into the Headmaster's Office felt like entering the office of an executive banker or CEO: with spotless white sofas, with the plush carpet, the carefully selected flowers. Everything was in harmony – the smells, the colours, the photos hung on the walls, the fresh flowers on each desk. Even the piles of papers on the desk seemed to be in a coordinated mess. Mr Anderson pointed

them out to me to show how many students had applied to go to the school, piles and piles of applications. The Head Master was an imposing and authoritative man, smiling and friendly but at the same time intimidating. Perhaps, I thought, these were the qualities they are trying to instil in their pupils: the ability to be amicable while ensuring that those in front of you know you are in authority.

I had already asked a few of the pupils what they thought of Mr Anderson. Jeremy, the Headboy, had regular meetings with him, so he was one of the pupils that knew him a lot better than the rest of the school cohort.

I really like him. I've never had any problems with him, so I don't know the dark side of him as such. He is an incredible public speaker, an incredible orator. I guess his people skills are not that great. It is only recently that he started acknowledging my parents. I mean they come to all of the school events, whether it is sports or drama or music or anything like that. And he has only just started to say hello. One-to-one I don't think he is terribly welcoming; he is sort of awkward I guess. But in large crowds he is an incredible speaker. I mean I do like him, partly because I got to know him a lot better. He could involve himself more with the students. You do see him walk around the grounds to pick up rubbish and put bags away; he doesn't involve himself much with pupils though, in my opinion.

Jeremy's account sounded as if he liked the fact that the Head Master showcased an entrepreneurial spirit and had the skills of a successful businessman. Despite his lack of involvement with students, this did not seem to matter much to Jeremy. Soft skills were highly desirable to staff and pupils and perhaps it was these skills which Jeremy appreciated in the Head Master. I did not believe that the pupils needed to be directly involved with the Head Master necessarily;

however, from my discussions with them they mostly shared Jeremy's viewpoint: he was both slightly distant but also a very erudite man. While asking staff and pupils to describe the school, they also mentioned Mr Anderson as the defining person in transforming the school to what it is today.

When I asked the Head Master what relationship he had with the pupils he gave a somehow different account:

I talk to sixth formers a lot. I mean prefects and upper sixth, I go out and talk to people. And the lower ones come and talk to me, which is quite sweet [...] I go and watch them in sports, might speak to them there, if I watch a play, I go and watch assemblies as well. I hope, they know who I am. I mean, I wouldn't know the name of every child in the school, but I know a lot of them.

Iro: And what about parents?

Parents! Harder to know their names, because I only see them very occasionally, but some parents are very closely involved with the life of the school so obviously, for example, the Parents' Association, and there are other parents who want to see me because they are worried about their child for some reason. Parents usually know when it is serious enough and whether the Head should be involved and normally they know if someone else is the right person to talk to. [...] Sometimes they want to bring it to me, because it might be a financial issue, affording the fees, they are worried that their child will not get into the sixth form. Sometimes they complain [laughter].

It seemed to me that these two different accounts reflected the way the school was administered. Mr Anderson was responsible for the entrepreneurial/business decisions regarding the school, while Mr Jones was more involved with the

everyday decisions and the pastoral care given to the pupils: what a school would appear to be on a surface level.

It is true that Mr Anderson was very effective in transforming the school to give it a new reputation as a school which could compete with high ranked private schools. Before he joined, the school was making thousands in profits every year but now the profits were in the millions, money that was raised from fees but also donations from alumni, partnerships and other business ventures. Whereas before they were struggling to recruit pupils, there were now more pupils applying than they could accept. Overall, both the account of Mr Anderson, staff, and my own perception of the everyday running of the school, this was now a school which was very attractive to parents. The transformed school, then, was seen as a good choice for those who lived nearby and could not find a state school which would offer them high educational standards.

When I met the Head Master, I wanted to find out how he would describe what they were doing different from before. It seemed interesting that there was very little emphasis on the academic rigour the school was promoting, when it evidently had better results year on year and it had substantially improved in the rankings of GCSE and A level results. One of my first questions, then, was why they did not stress the academic more, as part of the focus of the school.

The academic is not the only important thing. When they leave the school, they will need to be adaptive to a changing world. They can learn a lot of skills lot by sport, art, music, etc. It is our duty to educate children in a more holistic way. [...] The co-curricular, as we call them, is just as important. What we are offering is a more broad curriculum [...] while other schools might say that their children will get 100% A*, what we are saying is that we are interested in leadership, teamwork,

collaboration, innovation, creativity, we are interested in the broader picture. [...] they are all good at something. It is not the case of not being achievers in one area at least. Whether this is academic, sports, drama, music, or whatever they want to achieve.

The language of achievement was used by Mr Anderson; a depiction of how pupils of Emanuel were encouraged to succeed. I thought it was interesting how it was mentioned that even if they did not do so well, they would still be welcome at the school. However, it seemed to me that if a lower achieving pupil found themselves in such a high achieving environment, they might not have felt comfortable if they could not keep up. Moreover, from what I observed they still needed to be engaged academically for them to be able to be at the school. As the grades of the school overall were improving, the entrance barrier was getting higher as well. Mr Simons, a Politics and History teacher, for example, had complained that his son was not allowed in the school, even though he believed he did well at the entrance exam. Pupils mentioned friends who had to leave before Year 12 because they did not do so well in their GCSEs. However, I thought the school politics behind that were a bit more complicated than what I was allowed to know. Senior staff denied such practice, although there was an underlying idea that practices had changed compared to the past and if pupils were not performing academically this was possibly not the environment for them, without being explicitly excluded. Admittedly, this would probably not have happened a decade ago; with much lower standards and fewer applicants, procedures were more relaxed. However, with the high-achieving middle-classes in the area and the shifting demographic of the school, things had been changing. Simon, an Upper Sixth History and Politics student, who had been at the school for the past six years and had experienced some of these changes, was asked to comment on how he believed the cohort of the pupils had changed over his years at the school.

Well I think it is hard. They are not discriminating, but they are not going out of their way to positively discriminate in that sense. My intake when I joined, it was easier to get in. It was a private school that didn't focus solely on academics, like Hilltop⁴. They encouraged you to be involved in sports and other abilities. Whereas now I think there is a danger of it going down a certain route. It just follows Hilltop, in which case it loses its personality as a school. It still encourages drama and art, because there are the facilities to do so. But it will only allow people to do drama and art and take them if they are academically apt enough.

I thought it was very interesting that a pupil would notice that and criticise the fact that the school had been changing. I thought that pupils, staff, and parents all believed that the school should retain its distinct character but they all wanted to achieve academically. Therefore, at times, certain adjustments needed to be made. Both parents and pupils still seemed to value the idea that the school was not hothousing pupils. However, there were some doubts whether the new direction of the school would be beneficial. Through my discussions with the participants, I came to form the opinion that as long as pupils were succeeding in their exams and were engaged with the various activities neither the homogeneity of the school nor the change in the cohort more broadly would negatively affect their experience nor how they viewed the school.

Engaging with the school life

Admittedly, the students were encouraged to try their best, be involved in different activities, and were given a plethora of opportunities to try what they

⁴ Changed name of another private school.

might be good at. Students on their part could realise that only paying attention to the academic aspects would not be enough to be part of the St Aber's community. Matthew, an Upper Sixth student who was very vocal in his views and whose voice I include a lot in this thesis, recognised the emphasis that the school put on the wide range of the activities on offer, when asked what he thought the school tried to promote, based on his own perspective.

They obviously have the extra curricula that they always go on about. But I think it works both ways. The school offers you stuff and if you contribute to that, you get a lot out of it. Because a lot of the people that left in year 11, I think 15-20 left, they didn't fully embrace all the opportunities that were given to them, they felt a bit left out. This is something interesting, a lot of people say they don't have the same relationship with the school that maybe I have or other people have, who do music or whatever.

He went on to identify that doing all these extra activities had the potential to make you build a special bond with the school. It could define who you are in a lot of ways, and if you are not being part of it, you will eventually feel excluded.

Matthew: But some people left because they felt not hated but
[long pause]

Iro: By who? By other pupils?

Matthew: I don't know. It's really weird. It's like personal stuff that they went through. I don't know if it was also frustration because they hadn't achieved what they wanted to achieve.

It was interesting to see that even though the school offered the co-curricular activities as opportunities for the pupils to advance their skills, the added stress

to be successful in something, as the Head Master described, could make students resentful towards the school. Matthew used a rather strong word “hated” and I was not sure how to address that with him, at a school which prided itself in its welcoming nature.

Iro: Who defines achievement? From exams?

Matthew: If you are in after school with a bunch of people from your year or sit at the prefects’ office or something, you build a bond with people, instead of just going home and be on Xbox, like a community. A lot of these people they just used to do that. Not really push themselves.

Iro: Was no one telling them to engage more?

Matthew: They did to some extent sports and things but if you are not willing to do these things in year 7 and 8, if you don't establish yourself as someone who does these things. It is up to them really.

Matthew made a point which I thought resonated with the fact that neoliberal education places the responsibility onto the individual. As he mentioned it is “up to them”; for them to be successful in school life they needed to be actively engaged. He also identified doing sports as an instrumental part of being integrated in the school; sport, as discussed elsewhere in the thesis was at the core of the school and how pupils shaped some ideas. Those who did not partake in the co-curricular activities of the school eventually felt left out, as they never integrated with St Aber’s community and the practices which it valorised.

It could be suggested that the traits the school was promoting were highly desirable for parents. A lot of them did not come from established middle-class families, did not grow up with money, nor had academic qualifications.

Therefore, the resilience and grit the school was trying to promote fitted with a lot of the parents' success story. One parent I met through my gym friends, who were considering St Aber's described it like this, when we bumped into each other at an Open Day:

'they [the school] also remind me of this seminar I went to through work. They were comparing the different generations. Baby boomers, X, Y, and Z. And the seminar instructor said 'You are the generation that can just go and change the world. So just go and do that. Leave the room and change the world'. This is what I want my children to be able to do.'

This go-getter attitude, or can-do as described by the Head Master, could foster confidence in the pupils. Confidence was a key word for St Aber's: parents, staff and pupils used it often to describe how they saw themselves. Jeremy was asked to describe what developed this quality in him.

I mean I am from a family of 4, so we are all quite outspoken, try to get attention from each other. So I guess it is quite natural in the family dynamics. But I mean, I was sort of primary school captain as well. And my brother was the same. So I guess he sets the precedents and he is the trailblazer and such and I follow suit. So naturally we want to better each other. But I guess it all stems from being part of a large family where everyone is sort of high achieving. Our parents didn't push us or anything. But they gave us tutors in primary school to get into St Aber's and we were encouraged to involve ourselves in stuff like sport and then you can automatically stand out from the rest of the people in your year. But I don't think it is something the school has created. I think it is has developed it more.

The importance of the family in how students developed a lot of their characteristics had been described by most of the pupils. This played a role in why this study is concerned with showing that both the locale and the family – a kind of imagined community, as described by Anderson (1983) – was very important in what routines became normative. It was these processes, the competitiveness and confidence embraced by the families of Mawreley, which St Aber's was mirroring and which potentially contributed to it becoming so successful. Another example that shows how pupils of St Aber's came to shape their ideas within the *total locale* came from Father Clarke, the Chaplain at St Aber's. He was asked to describe the pupils of the school, as they were in 2016 compared to ten years ago.

It may well be that pupils here reflect maybe, they will reflect, their parents. And the parents here, quite a few will be, what one might call the more liberal professionals, journalists, in the media and so on. I think you might get a different view if it was a different school, which still might be white middle-class but the background of the parents was business and so on. I have noticed a massive difference teaching here, from when I was a chaplain at this other school in north London, very similar outlook but very different pupils.

Father Clarke seemed to believe what assumptions I had been making: that the pupils are largely affected by their parents. As he mentioned the parents in the area were liberal, in the sense that they valued entrepreneurialism, were open to ideas, and in their own words did not want to push their children beyond their limits academically, challenge them but not overstretch them. In their majority, they were looking for a rounded education.

Parental decisions and worries

Although the vast majority of the pupils came from well-off families¹, there was a small number of families who struggled with money. Despite the financial burden that this might entail for a lot of the family budget, some parents still preferred to send their children to a fee-paying school, as they recognized the value of the education it could provide and did not want to risk their children's future. During an Open Day, I asked a parent why they were considering St Aber's.

You just want the best for your child. I mean, we will struggle a little. But it is the only option around here. It's not only about educational success. I just want my child to be a good human, you know. I don't care about the academic so much. I just want her to be happy. I mean, obviously, I want her to do well at school. But you want them to be happy. That's why I prefer St Aber's and not other schools that put so much pressure.

This is where the narrative of the school on not being an academic hothouse, was important. Both parents and pupils appeared aware of the risks of too much stress and the effects on mental health and well-being. Matthew, for example, compared St Aber's to another school, when asked to describe his schooling experience.

I think a lot of other schools are very strict, well maybe not strict but I don't know how to explain it. Like my cousin went to Rowland's⁵ and he hasn't been as happy. They have a very rigorous regime. They are pushed, there is more order. They want their data sheets to show specific things at the end of the year, right. This is their primary concern. Whereas here possibly not as much. [...] I have met other people from Rowland's and

¹ For example, there were 23 bankers, 10 barristers, 24 CEOs, 186 company directors or executive directors, to give a small sample of the different professions.

⁵ Changed name of another private school.

they are very competitive. I mean that is a real school to study and he didn't like it there. He got kicked out. I mean I don't think this will happen here. They will be a lot more compassionate.

The fact that educational establishments are prepared to 'kick you out' if you don't achieve academically is concerning in itself. Matthew's views depict the idea that intense pressure was not what parents were looking for when considering St Aber's. Another instance was Olivia, a girl in Upper Sixth who I would describe as very academic, but also equally artistic, who drew comparisons with an all-girls private school, one that would again be described as an academic hothouse.

I mean my friends at Catherine House⁶ have eating disorders, well not all my friends, but just because when you are in that weird single sex environment this is not like real life, and it is so academic focused, high pressured, you have to try and control your eating to balance that and you feel that you constantly struggle. I think they enjoy the friendship but the schooling sounds really stupid. Whereas here, yes, there is an increasing emphasis on academia because the results are going up, but the Headmaster has always maintained that St Aber's is kind of a school where you can do everything.

She praised the school that allowed her to take Theatre Studies as an A level and *'actually pursue it like a scholar and still apply somewhere like Oxford⁷, where they might look down on a subject like that'*. She recognized that the school was very encouraging when pupils make their choices of A levels and how they try to develop different types of intelligence as *'it is not only about academia, you*

⁶ Changed name of another private school.

⁷ Olivia had been offered a place at Oxford University.

have to develop your emotional intelligence and all the rest of it'. She defined the ethos of the school as:

make you a rounded person so you are best prepared for life beyond. Lots of people here, they do encourage other options, because they know that you can be out of your depth if it isn't your choice. So yeah in my words, make you well rounded.

She also described how her parents really wanted her to have that holistic education, as it was something they never got themselves. They both went to not very good schools and especially her dad spent a lot of time expelled from school. Her mum never went to university, and whereas her dad did, he was '*kicked out of uni*' and never went back. Fortunately for them, they moved to Hong Kong and were able to make their fortunes there, but their educational journey was not something that they wanted their children to experience. Their trajectory resembled that to a lot of parents at the school. They made money through their efforts, it was not inherited, and a few of them would identify as working-class while growing up. As some of pupils reflected, education for their parents was not part of their aspirations while they were growing up but that had changed. This is why they seemed to believe that if their children were to be successful, financially, they needed to get a good education.

It is interesting to see how condemnatory the students were of schools which pushed pupils to breaking point. They represented a shift in what was of value with regards to education; a niche point marketed by the Head Master, which spread quite widely to those parents who lived around the area. As the pupils above mentioned, there can be pressures put on young people who come from certain socioeconomic backgrounds as there might be high expectations of them. As Luthar and Becker (2002) found in their study of affluent youth, there were signs of high distress among those who had high socioeconomic status.

High achievement pressures, both from parental expectations and their own maladaptive perfectionistic strivings, meant that young people suffered from stress and were prone to substance abuse or other issues. Parents who I talked to at Open Days seemed increasingly worried about issues such as mental health and general well-being of teenagers.

London is a difficult place to live at to begin with. There is a lack of community in the areas and for teenagers it is good to have a gang, you know, walk to school together, come back together, be able to talk about their days. And there is this community at school. They have this support of the community. I don't want them to be isolated and buried in books. Yeah, I would like them to go to university and be academically excellent but there is more to it. I don't want them to be all stressed. It is not what this is about. (Carole at an Open Day, asked why she was considering St Aber's)

Remarkably, Carole used the word 'gang' to describe how her child would be part of this community of the school. The word in any other context would have much more negative connotations, but it somehow sounded normal when she said it. Perhaps because the pupils of St Aber's were not seen as the kind of pupils who could join a gang. Even though the word community was mentioned a lot in the school, as part of their ethos, I believe the kind of community they promoted was rather one-dimensional. Community cohesion was achieved through the connections of those already similar to each other, where frictions, because of structural differences, might be less likely. This was mainly evident through the fact that the school was very homogeneous. However, pupils were disapproving of this homogeneity. Emily, an Upper Sixth student, for example, was asked whether the school should be doing anything differently to enhance their experience.

Maybe off campus stuff, maybe if we go out more, which is a bit difficult, where would we go like what should they do. Maybe primary schools. I don't know. Like I don't understand why we don't play state schools in sport at all. Which is like, not, because all schools round here, they are all pretty much the same. It's not huge amount of difference between them, but I think the more interaction we could have with people that aren't necessarily on the pedestal as it were, would be probably, I don't know how they would do it.

I asked Emily to elaborate on what she did not like about this situation and what she meant by the above.

The bubble. When I was going round unis a big thing for me was that it wasn't a bubble. So I went to Exeter. So it is basically replicated what it is here. It was everyone basically the same thing, looked the same, behaved the same, and I hated it, it is not what I am looking for at all. So, I think it is probably my biggest criticism of it, but we cannot really avoid it, but you know (laughs) we all wear the same thing, we all do the same thing, we can talk the same way, we all live in the same area pretty much. And I think this is a shame because if you go to a school other people should have the opportunity to come and we don't interact with a range, like I do, I don't... in social life.

Emily disapproved of the fact that there was limited interaction with other schools or areas, where everyone is not like them, which indirectly implied white and middle-class. The idea of the community, therefore, was somewhat limited to those who subscribed to certain demographics. Higher education was

mentioned both by students and staff as the place where St Aber's pupils would be able to interact with a wider range of people. However, the formative years of most pupils included minimal contact with people who were not like them. Hugo, a rather quiet boy in Upper Sixth, provided a similar account on how integration with different groups of people was not being achieved. This was his response when I asked him to describe the ethos of the school.

Hugo: Yeah, I'm trying to think what to say, not to sound too confusing...erm...I think they do try and promote kind of a multicultural environment, having a good education, making friends and stuff like that.

Iro: When you say they are trying to be multicultural, they are not succeeding massively.

Hugo: No, no they are not succeeding, because of the people that apply and giving places to them. But I think...

Iro: But do you think they are trying to be inclusive and tolerant towards other people?

Hugo: Yeah yeah definitely. I mean the very least they do is promote things against racism and stuff like that. Which is not the best response. But... yeah under the circumstances I think it is difficult, without being any racist to most people.

It was difficult to understand why most responses mentioned that it was difficult to engage with people from different backgrounds. I raised the point with senior staff and tried to understand what was meant by that I never really received a response to that. Perhaps, admitting that there were clear divisions between classes and ethnicities, was something the school would not like to be associated with.

On white, affluent privilege

As Power et al. (2003) state, it is becoming more common for middle class parents to seek private schools which are inclusive; perhaps as distinct from what historically was seen as public schools which educated statesmen and the upper-classes. This was also expressed by Ball et al. (2004) who noted that if middle-class parents were opting for a private school, they would prefer one where there was a better mix of people. They did not want to exclude their children from the ‘vast proportion of society’ (ibid.: 233).

In theory, all schools are places which operate in impartial and fair ways so that all students have equal chances to be ‘winners’ if they deserve to be; however, ‘students’ social class has remained a better indicator of whether they will be winners rather than their merit and effort’ (Howard, 2008: 33). It is not only that the school pupils attend or the university that they manage to secure a place, which act as indicators for their future professional opportunities; but it is also how schools prepare poor and affluent pupils for different futures. This is done by ‘teaching the poor the appropriate attitudes and behaviours for becoming good workers and by teaching the affluent the skills that prepare them to manage and control the working class. According to this analysis, school life is almost completely subordinated to the needs of the economy’ (ibid.:18). The myth of meritocracy and the pursuit of equal opportunity rather than equality, as criticised by Michael Young (2008), mean that those from poorer backgrounds still cannot achieve the same levels of success no matter how hard they try. It is very difficult to overcome the disadvantages with which they start their lives.

Khan conducted a study at an elite boarding school in the US, St Paul’s. He describes the privilege students were experiencing:

In looking at seemingly mundane acts of everyday life—from eating meals to dancing and dating—we will see how privilege

becomes inscribed upon the bodies of students and how students are able to display their privilege through their interactions. In being normalised privilege is not seen as a product of differences in opportunities but instead as a skill, talent, capacity— “who you are” (2011: 16).

Similarly, privilege was not something which was discussed at St Aber’s. Everyday practices and spaces - a swimming pool, high-tech labs, trips to India – were seen as part of life, their privileged status rarely questioned.

McIntosh (1989) discusses the effects which white privilege has in daily life, effects which white people usually take for granted, such as the opportunity to see people like you widely represented in various aspects of your life. As McIntosh sees it race is the main criterion which can ensure privilege in everyday life, allowing for dominance of one particular group over others; without necessarily the intent to disadvantage those below the social hierarchy. Gaztambide- Fernandez et al. describe privilege in a similar way:

Privilege is not simply about money, but it is also about the advantages granted to some subjects through the bodies they inhabit, and their ability to enact particular ideological frames and subject positions materially, symbolically, and as we will argue, affectively (2013: 34).

Privilege is mostly luck; however, even if those in privileged positions do not want their actions to be at the expense of others, privilege is difficult to disavow and not benefit from their favourable circumstances (Choules 2006).

Most pupils acknowledged that they are privileged and they discussed it in a manner of shame almost. Hugo mentioned equality as something he felt

passionate about. Therefore, I asked him what he thought about the fact that he went to a private school, which afforded him certain advantages.

Actually, we were talking last night over dinner about money and the link of money and happiness and how, you know, we are in the top 1% or whatever of people in the world who have money and stuff and yeah, just, also my family take me travelling quite a lot so I will see the poverty in other countries like in India or China, Sri Lanka and stuff like that, so I know I am privileged. Yeah yeah we always bring that up [with my family]. That we should be grateful and we should see that, when we talk to others and talk to other people.

I found it interesting that Hugo referred to his privilege in relation to people in Sri Lanka or China, places which were far away, ignoring the fact that the UK had increasing numbers in poverty. However, despite such discussions it was rather difficult for pupils to move away from their privilege, as this was all they had experienced. I raised the point of privilege and their education compared to state schools, during a focus group. These are some of the collective responses:

Simon: I wouldn't say that people who go to state schools don't have any opportunity, because a lot of my friends, most of my friends from primary school, ended up going to a state school. And they, sort of, at least two of them managed to get into Oxbridge. But going to a private school is an additional advantage, it's something that puts me a level above other people who might be at the same ability, of natural ability, as me. And purely on the basis that my parents, or their family, are more wealthy I get more opportunities, which I believe is a bit unfair, but there is not much I can do about it.

Jeremy: I think it is what you make of the opportunities. In my year at All Saints I was very different, I was the only pupil to go to private school. And then I do feel it is the opportunities which you create for yourself. I don't think going to a state school inhibits you in many ways. It is more what you put in. I am a strong believer that whatever you put in, you take out.

Olivia: I definitely think I am privileged. I think that I really am for the sort of advantage I have and the private education I have got and the work ethic that instils in you, more because of the support I have because of my family as well. I know I am privileged and not everyone has the same background. I mean I don't want to take too much out of my own credit as well but this is part of the reason why I am going to university. For a lot of people in this country, especially now that they have cut grants and stuff, university is not even an option and I think what we have an issue with in the UK and especially London is the gap between the middle class and, you know, people with less wealth. It just would seem insurmountable because there is such a large divide and with that the best way to counter that is education. And if they are taking money away from education they are only going to make it more elitist and more unachievable. It puts more and more people off university and the chance of bettering themselves. I just find that really illogical.

Oliver: I would say I think there is obviously a sense of privilege in terms of schooling, or I have grown up without being, we were maybe a little more well off than other people. But I wouldn't say, it would be hard to say you are not privileged

compared to that go to the state school, some people have to go to the local comprehensive I guess.

Iro: Would you describe St Aber's as a bit of a bubble then?

Oliver: Erm...it's not something I have thought about. I don't really understand how it can be a bubble.

Iro: Well because, for example, have you been to Brixton?

Oliver: Yeah

Iro: Does it look like St Aber's?

Oliver: Well, no, but it is the area. You could say Mawerley is a bubble. As is the whole of the south west in itself.

There are several points which students made in the above passages. Their views ranged from feeling extremely privileged to not really believing their circumstances would make a difference to their lives later on. It can be argued that some of the views they shared come from sensationalist stories which they might see in the media. The fact, for example, that you make your own opportunities. There is also some allusion to the neoliberal ideas of making it for yourself, despite your background. It can be argued that perhaps some of them felt like that because their families had these experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked how St Aber's approach to education has marketed the school as a place where the emphasis is on creating well-rounded individuals and equipping the pupils with character traits which can make them competitive in the market force. The Head Master, the main driver of these changes, described his vision of the school, and through this portrayal I argued that it is this vision and his approach which has transformed the school, along with wider

changes in Mawerley. The emphasis on co-curricular activities has been discussed by pupils and teachers and it was argued that activities which happen alongside the curriculum are of substantial benefit to the pupils but require both a commitment to what the school promotes and also confine St Aber's' pupils in a white, middle-class bubble of privilege, as most of their social encounters happen within the school or with those in and around Mawerley, who are also similar to them: socially, culturally and economically. In the following chapter I analyse some themes which were related to values more broadly and how they shaped pupils' understandings and views. The next chapter will look at one of the main themes which emerged: the introduction of the teaching of Fundamental British Values in schools.

Chapter Five

British Values: on Tolerance and Difference

This chapter examines how the introduction of British Values was perceived at St Aber's. In itself, the introduction caused some controversy and was described as an exclusionary force. Such views are expressed by the participants at St Aber's, as exemplified through their experiences of compiling documents which reflected their attempts to promote British Values. These values will be discussed both with relation to who they include and exclude and by extension, analyse who or what can be considered British. Some detailed attention will also be given to sport as a point of national identification, especially because sports played a vital role in the life of the school. The chapter concludes by discussing how tolerance was perceived at St Aber's and in the wider locality, since tolerance is at the core of British Values and central at the ethos of St Aber's and the liberal ideologies of parents who chose St Aber's.

British Values and exclusion of the Other

In 2011, the UK Government set out what they view as Fundamental British Values (FBV) identified as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different beliefs and faiths. They came under the PREVENT strategy implemented by the coalition between 2010 and 2015, with three distinct objectives: 1) respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it; 2) prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and ensure that they are given appropriate advice and support 3) work with sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation that we need to address. Rather controversial to the definition of British Values was that as of 2014, schools were required to promote and teach them in schools (GOV.CO.UK 2011).

Up until that point schools were only required to respect them but the government implemented stricter guidelines. At the time, a lot of schools, St Aber's included, believed that this was a response to the Trojan Horse scandal (BBC News 2015). Several schools in Birmingham were put under special measures and their headteachers questioned in response to an alleged plot to control the schools by putting more Muslim people in positions of power at the schools. However, after many inquiries the five teachers who were accused of alleged plotting were allowed to go back to the classroom as the allegations proved false and the government's case against them was criticised as 'abuse of justice' (BBC News 2017; Adams 2017). However, at the time, policies were put in place and Ofsted would start to assess the measures taken by schools to ensure that British Values were part of the curriculum and provide guidelines for better implementation of the strategy.

It was under these circumstances that this study started; trying to unpack how tolerance was acted upon throughout the school and how British Values were embraced and taught across the curriculum.

Pluralism as a contributing factor to the character of Britain, has always occupied a prominent place in the social and political rhetoric. However, the

introduction of FBV as a necessary element of teaching across schools in the UK, showcased dissonance both as to what extent policies can monitor classroom practices and of what constitutes Britishness. Little consensus has been reached on whether FBV can, in reality, contribute to a meaningful co-existence of the various groups in multicultural Britain and as to whether such teachings alienate groups rather than make them feel more British. Teachers, on the one hand, express criticism on how they can position their personal and professional beliefs to accommodate the political discourse of the FBV (Farrell, 2016). On the other hand, they question the socio-political context within which British values are embedded and challenge contentions of what constitutes British in British values (Maylor, 2016).

Although the introduction of FBV in schools as a compulsory element of teaching is relatively new, having only been introduced in 2014, and the consequences of their implementation have not been assessed in-depth, the worries and reservations mentioned above are also expressed by the participants in my study. FBV were discussed as an amorphous boundary of exclusion/inclusion and in/tolerance. The idea of Britishness, despite its porous nature as discussed in the introductory chapter is used by policy makers and politicians as an exclusionary force (Smith 2016), almost forcing people to attach a meaning to it, without the necessary clarifications by those requesting this.

Therefore, it can be argued that the introduction of FBV has allowed for ‘racist nativism’ as defined by Perez Huber et al.:

the assigning of values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be people and immigrants of colour and thereby defend the rights of whites, or natives to dominance (2008: 43).

Galindo and Vigil (2006) analysed anti-immigrant discourses and concluded that representations in the media against Latinos in the US, were not always racist in

nature but nativist. In other words, it implies assimilation into the dominant culture and elimination of unfavourable cultural, religious, and/or political ideas related to one's ethnic background. Therefore, those who are not 'natives' are not excluded, as racism would require, but are asked to integrate. This, however, can imply that whiteness and the culture associated with that become dominant and allow for structural advantages to be perpetuated (Smith 2016).

In Britain, extreme expressions of patriotism have largely been associated with fanaticism and linked to far-right protest movements, such as the EDL. Nationalist rhetorics expressed through more mainstream political discourses, such as 'British jobs for British people' (Gordon Brown) or 'muscular multiculturalism' (David Cameron) (Southphommasane, 2012). However, the pride for the country in the UK does not only rely on 'an 'ordinary' conception of community: that is, 'a group of people who share a range of values, a way of life, identify with the group and its practices and recognise each other as members of that group'. It also draws on a 'moralised' conception of community, in which members have mutual concern for each other' (ibid.: 25). This moralised perception, which creates the image of a body politic which adhere to the same moral values is where the discussion of British Values can be seen to stem from: the idea that for someone to be a good patriot they need to have the same moral compass as those who claim to 'love' the country and belong to it. Therefore, the rights which are given to citizens come with responsibilities and obligations, whereby personal interests and affiliations need to be sacrificed for the common good, for someone to be treated as an equal member of society. The fact that values which were deemed British were introduced in the political rhetoric suggests that there are those who do not abide by such unwritten rules and questions need to be raised about their citizenship and national belonging.

In more recent years, terrorist incidents have maximised 'security fears attenuated by terrorist attacks carried out by extremists in the name of Islam. These terrorist incidents often suggest that an unbridgeable civilizational divide

exists between the 'western' and an alien 'Islamic' world. The Muslim migrant is thus constructed as the carrier of antagonistic values' and is posed as an enemy within (Taras, 2013: 419). Feely & Simon (1992) note how the current penology system and attributing blame is markedly less concerned with moral sensibility, diagnosis or treatment. Instead it focuses on identification of the perpetrators, management of groupings in accordance to what is considered as dangerousness and their exclusion. The role of attributing blame, therefore, becomes a managerial task, which is not looking for solutions, rather with naming the perpetrator. This has led many Muslim leaders to assert their belief that more Muslims will feel victimised as they are being portrayed as the 'enemy', while the majority of them might feel part of the national culture.

Although the introduction of FBV was meant to address issues of cohesion on a wider scale, it is primarily Muslim communities which ended up being singled out, an example of this being the alleged 'Trojan Horse' claims. The Other was no longer the foreign far-away Other but rather the dangerous enemy within, 'who must be placed under surveillance and who needs to be assimilated by liberal society' (Lander 2016: 276). Teachers, who have been teaching in multicultural and multi ethnic classrooms and might have experience of successful integration of the various groups, were now told by Cameron that multiculturalism is not working in its current form and there needs to be a turn to muscular liberalism, as Britain has been too soft and people believe they can do whatever they like (Lander 2016; Cameron 2014). Therefore, teachers have been put at the centre of this national problematic; with Cameron almost implying that they are partly to blame because they have not been teaching integration and respect well enough and they have now somehow become the gatekeepers for both national cohesion and surveillance of attitudes. This is a role which has been condemned by teachers nationwide, as they are being positioned as the 'discursive subjects of the securitised neoliberal imaginary' (Lander 2016: 276). Therefore, as Struthers (2016) argues, if there is any way that these values can be used in a way that will unite people, then they need to

be understood under a human rights framework, something which most schools claim they already do.

The study was conducted at the time of the Paris attacks, in November 2015, where more than 130 people were killed and hundreds more injured through a series of coordinated terrorist attacks mainly in the capital of France (bbc.co.uk, 2015). Since the study was concluded, in the summer of 2016, there have been more terrorist incidents even closer to home –Westminster Bridge 22nd March 2017, Manchester Arena 22nd May 2017, London Bridge 3rd June 2017. The portrayal of the Muslim Other being perceived as responsible for such killings, means that other terrorist incidents such as the murder of Jo Cox MP, in 16th June 2016 by a far-right extremist, are not condemned under the terrorist label as widely, even though their motivations can be the same. In response to that Amber Rudd, Home Secretary in 2017 has asserted the public that the controversial Prevent strategy to halt radicalisation will be ‘beefed up’ (Ford, 2017), without acknowledging the divisions which might result from it.

Also in 2015, little Alan Kurdi died while his family were trying to flee their war-torn country. A picture of his dead body washed out in a beach in Turkey embodied the refugee crisis and attracted condemnation across the political and social spectrum (Time.com. 2015; Kinglsey, 2016; Fisk, 2016; Mackey, 2015). Questions about humanitarian aid were raised as to why people were more concerned about the incidents in Paris and not with the thousands of people who were dying in Syria and other counties in the region. As the news were dominated by the terrorist attacks in Paris, Mr Simons mentioned the incidence in the History class. Therefore, I decided to ask the pupils what their perspective on the issue was. My main question was why there was such widespread coverage in the news of the Paris attacks, but not of other similar incidents in the Middle East. Matthew replied:

It is more close to home, miss. We are not saying it is not bad what is happening in Syria, but it is not just across the Channel.

It feels, you know, I can take the train and be there in a couple

of hours, but I would never go to Syria. It feels they are more like us, we share more things. We speak the same language, we eat the same food, it is more like happening at home.

I pointed out that they did not actually speak the same language, if anything the French refuse to speak English. And the British barely speak any other language. The students laughed but what I perceived they were saying was that people feel closer and more connected with those they feel they share common interests or ideals. Despite the outcry that the values termed by Cameron as British, are not only British but Western, there was still an implication that there were divisions between those with Western and those with other values. What this can showcase is that people like 'us' (who look like 'us', who dress like 'us', who believe in the same liberalism like 'us') share these values. This rhetoric creates a divide between the liberal, democracy-loving people, and those who are trying to undermine such values – putting vast numbers of people into this unidentified category, but largely involving non-white others. Therefore, anything outside this spectrum can be seen as too extreme and not Western.

Pedagogic considerations and FBV

David Cameron, wrote an article in 2014 where he identified the FBV and then went to say that they are as British to him as fish and chips, football, and the Union flag. As Ganesh (2014) observes Britain has a certain diffidence about itself. A laissez-faire approach to a country's identity can be implemented when the country has ethnicity and common institutions which allow people to bond perhaps more organically. However, with Britain being such a diverse nation, culturally and racially, this laxity of identification can prove dangerous. Ganesh has a point in saying that identifying certain values of a country does not mean that the country will thus be defined against others. However, his argument is rather problematical. It is this amalgam of cultures which has shaped Britain over

the years; therefore, by assuming people do not espouse these ‘British’ values, which they might in reality consider as their own has the potential to alienate people. Cameron urged for confidence in implementing these FBV for namely two reasons: economic and social. Regarding the economy, the vibrant democracy combined with free markets – the neoliberal approach introduced by Margaret Thatcher – is at the core of the British state and nation, according to Mr Cameron. The social aspect is that these values can unite people, as he believes that for a long time people settled in the country without adhering to any particular common values, which did not lead to unity and also promoted extremism. In practice, he identified certain measures such as ensuring that everyone speaks English and being able to understand what the main institutions stand for, which he believed would bring the required unity. He placed schools at the heart of the drive to promote these values and make sure that pupils are safeguarded by extreme ideologies. However, by trying to ensure that pupils are safeguarded from extreme ideologies and allowing for individual liberty, the government has managed to invade pedagogic freedom. Professional and teaching spaces have been overrun by the securitisation agenda, which the government is trying to promote (Lander, 2016).

Apart from the pedagogic considerations, there is also something inherently political in such discussions, which can be challenging for its implications. Britishness and the various definitions of it have been used by politicians to serve their political purposes throughout the years. Michael Gove, the Education secretary who introduced the teaching of British Values at schools under the Coalition government, observed in 2007 that there is something un-British about trying to define Britishness, while Gordon Brown as Prime Minister was trying to define Britishness (Rigby 2014). A few years later, perhaps in an attempt to appeal to UKIP voters and those who view immigration as the cause for Britain’s economic and social ills, the Conservatives defined Britishness as certain values to be followed, placing little emphasis on the fact that they are rather universal. By branding them, however, British there is the danger of excluding people who identify as British but see Britain as different to

the land of Shakespeare and Locke. They identify with their Caribbean roots, their Muslim faith, or their ethnicity, along with their Britishness rather than choosing one affiliation. By branding certain values as British while not recognising the rich history of Britain, and its implications in the face of mass migration and legacies of colonisation mean that large numbers of people feel more alienated as they are left out of the national rhetoric. Their histories are almost excluded from the idea of the British nation. Therefore, many teachers have commented that the FBV as outlined by the government are likely to ‘incite or perpetuate intolerance towards minority ethnic groups’ (Struthers 2016: 90), rather than achieve the proposed aims of national unity.

One of the main criticisms that the introduction of FBV had was the fact that local authorities, schools, teachers, and pupils now had the responsibility of policing schools (Webber, 2015). It is as if the government was outsourcing its border control policing onto schools, creating suspects in every area of life. ‘This national security policing is policing of thoughts, intentions, opinions and attitudes, in a climate in which the Muslim community is by definition suspect. Inevitably, the brunt of this policing will be borne by the Muslim community’ (ibid.).

Mrs Carter, teacher of modern languages and responsible for the Life Skills programme, gave her own account on the issue:

It is difficult because we are a very international school⁸, so with this whole British values it is a bit missold. I think we should try and pass European or Western values. You know, it is a difficult one. The whole concept of being English or British, versus being anything else. It is what we have always been doing – by terming it British Values you just end up disgruntling people. Having to write all these documents...it does not help

⁸ I have asserted throughout the thesis that despite the staff promoting the school as very international, this was not necessarily the case, something which can be proven by analysing the demographic data of the pupils.

that much. It all happened because of the Birmingham scandal and now we all have to take the burden for this. And it is really difficult because the government did not say what these British values are...I mean, they gave a list of some things but in reality, what are they? If you go around and ask students they wouldn't know and it is profiling of Muslim students, we cannot control the borders in schools, this is not what we do.

Mrs Carter identified that pupils might feel European rather than only British, proving that identifications can be multifaceted and not exclusive in nature. However, even most importantly, she expressed the fear of profiling pupils and acting as a form of surveillance of individual actions, a function which schools would undeniably oppose, unless there was a clear pedagogical value attached to it, something not so evident with the teaching of FBV.

ProblematISING British Values in schools

The government published some actions which gave examples of what schools could do to teach FBV, including incorporating in the curriculum discussions of how democracy works in Britain compared to other countries, hold mock elections, ensure that all pupils make their voice heard, have extra-curricular activities which will promote British Values (GOV.CO.UK 2014). This includes vetting discussions which might show inclinations towards extremism and monitoring what content the students view online. However, as the Head of Upper Sixth, Mrs Eccles, put it:

It doesn't really matter what we teach them here [...] if they go home and their parents tell them certain things, this is what matters. Or online, they can find anything online, you cannot hide the Internet from them. The fact that the government

advocates that schools can alter or greatly influence what the parents tell their children is misleading.

It can be perceived as naïve to think that students do not get most of their information from online sources. As the pupils at the school had consistently mentioned they rely on the internet for all their research. They placed the school after family, friends and their own online research when it came to shaping their ideas. The role of the school for a lot of them was seen as secondary in transmitting information. Simon, an Upper Sixth pupil who was always very engaged in the lessons, commented on this during his interview, asked how he shaped his views on what he deemed socially and politically important.

I think the school do do stuff in that respect [to help them shape ideas about the world]. But I think a lot of it comes from the family, because otherwise we would all be identical. We would all be giving the same answers, so I think that the fact I am giving different answers shows that a lot of this is nurturing from the family. And I talk to friends or do my own research, we are at this age where we don't always believe what is shown in the news, we do our own research.

Simon could be considered a typical example of what pupils identified as the main source of information for them: there were plenty of sources, which extended beyond the school, and even beyond their families. During the interviews, all students were asked what influenced them the most and there was consensus that the school was not their primary point of shaping their ideologies. As Simon mentioned the school was one of the sources but primarily they relied on the internet or discussions with friends. Simon also referred to his dad buying the Guardian every day so he would read this while waiting for dinner to be made. There was, therefore, an amalgam of sources which students relied on and

excluding information while at the school, could not substantially change what information they could see through other means.

Alex, another pupil at Sixth Form, was asked the same question on the sources pupils used, and his first response was Google. He also believed that *'no pupil would be stupid enough to believe a lot of the false information they found online'*. *'Or share extremist views in school'*. Both Alex and Father Clarke seemed to share this belief: if anyone indeed had any extremist views they would not share them in a school like this, a liberal, metropolitan school, as it was described, both by staff and parents, and possibly fitted the rhetoric promoted in mass media of what or who is considered a metropolitan liberal. Alex mentioned that people with extremist views would not find anyone who would be willing to listen. Similarly, Father Clarke described the few Muslim students in the school as moderate, otherwise they would not be choosing this school.

As Cordon (2017) argues, Theresa May was right to place some emphasis on online platforms and their dissemination of extremist content by urging tech companies to do more to remove such content promptly. It has been shown via the various interviews with the pupils that the majority, if not all of them, rely primarily on online sources to form their views and finding such content can be relatively easy. However, the online world is much more complicated than that and the fact that schools are asked to control what students are viewing online is an impossible task, as staff below discuss.

When I first met Mr Jones our discussion on what I wanted to do at the school was mainly around British Values. The introduction of their teaching was new to the school and there was a lot of stress to ensure that guidelines and policies were in place before their inspection, as independent schools were not exempt from inspections related to how well they teach FBV. Mr Jones was somewhat upset or frustrated about this.

We have always been doing this. They are asking us to draft policies and guidelines, which we already have in place, just with a different name.

I thought that the main point of frustration for Mr Jones was the fact that there was a lot of time and effort that needed to be devoted on this task, involving several members of staff; but most importantly, I thought that the school felt that the government was implying that all this time they were not promoting such values. The school had had provision to ensure that people respected and tolerated one another. However, Mr Jones believed that it was almost impossible to monitor what the pupils did online, since certain websites could be blocked while at school; however, all pupils have smartphones, and they have internet at home. Therefore, blaming the school if such incidents happen or putting this responsibility on the school was perceived as unfair at St Aber's.

Mr Jones thought it would be best for me to talk to the Head of the Sixth Form, Mrs Eccles, along with the Chaplains to get a better idea of the steps taken at the school with regards to the teaching of FBV. Most members of staff believed that younger pupils at the school were if not too naïve, a bit soft, not so street-wise as they would be in other schools, and therefore, if anyone would be able to find radical information online would be the older pupils. I thought that was overgeneralisation, but I did not question that at the time, especially since I had chosen not to research younger pupils and could not see their perspective.

Talking to Mrs Eccles, it was evident that she was also critical of the hype around the FBV. She repeatedly expressed her opinion on the impossibility of what the strategy was asking them to do. When asked to comment on whether the students understood what FBV were she believed the term was mistaken.

I think they understand democratic values. They are quite aware of ISIS and what is happening with that. So I think they are very aware of what is happening with regards to British Values because they see it in the media. We haven't told them this is what we are doing because of BV. We are trying to do an audit of everything in the curriculum. And then have things said in

the Chapel. And for example, we will have a debate on the referendum on EU, which is a democratic thing. This is the sort of thing we do. It is what we have always done, so I think we are safe. In terms of our students getting radicalised, I don't think you can rule it out. We only have a tiny minority of Muslim students but you cannot rule it out because of what is on the internet.

As Mrs Eccles suggested trying to define what BV are, would not be effective in establishing them more widely. She also conflated radicalisation with the Muslim community. Moreover, she believed that adding an extra layer of monitoring on schools, already over-monitored by various exam bodies school governance and even parents, could create a sense of resentment from the schools.

Iro: But you know that teachers are asked to monitor students?

Mrs Eccles: This is impossible. The thing like with sex education etc. you cannot bury the information, that never works. I think what you have to do is put an active debate. There is a platform for sensible critique. We have to discuss it. I mean we talk about the internet and what false information there is up there. And we do it for other matters. And we have to talk about the fact that this information is there. I haven't met many students who think this is the glamorous thing to do, they can see a lot of the brutality with this.

As Mrs Eccles suggested, discussing the problems around difficult issues could assist in developing critical thinking; an approach more efficient than proclaiming that promoting FBV would solve issues of radicalisation. The staff were also aware of the responsibility teachers had in the ideas the pupils shaped. Therefore, the school tried to employ *sensible people*, as the Registrar, Mr Long,

described it. He believed that teachers alone could not do much, so there were elements such as the Chapel and the Life Skills programme, which could acquaint pupils with various aspects of society and create an environment of tolerance and acceptance. However, Mr Long identified a different factor which he believed could make the pupils at the school not likely to succumb to indoctrination and extremism.

Mr Long: [...] if you are going to get radicalisation of any kind it is going to be people, it is going to be what they do outside of school. But I think again, pupils come from a privileged background that they are probably not going to be put into that position. [...] Yeah because their lives are too nice. And I think, in order for them to be radicalised they need to feel in some way that they are not getting something, that you know they are missing out, and that's where someone can get in there and change their mindset.

Mr Long suggested that the pupils' lives were too comfortable and nice, which meant it was less likely for them to be radicalised. Similarly, when staff and pupils were asked, they would identify with liberal values, ie. open-minded and tolerant. Therefore, according to the ethos of the school and the beliefs most parents represented, it was unlikely for the school to foster extreme ideologies. If it were true that it is people who feel disgruntled with the status quo who are most likely to become radicalised, then St Aber's would probably not be a breeding grounds for such views. However, they were still accountable for what views they promoted and how they engaged pupils with FBV.

Perhaps the most striking example of the contradictory nature of how BV would be integrated into schooling came in the example below, taken from my field notes.

Diary entry: January 2016, Politics class

Mr Simons comes into the class, the only students are Simon and Alex and he tells them that he probably should not be doing this, but he thinks they are old enough to understand how weird the situation is. He stresses how all teachers across the whole of England must take this test,⁹ a test which assesses how well you can identify if someone is likely to become radicalised. He says he will show them the test and make them take it, although they should probably not tell others. He keeps repeating that the test is ridiculous. He tells pupils that there is no proper training for this for the teachers, and essentially anyone can do it at home and print out their own certificate. After going through various profiles, you are asked to decide whether the situation of the individuals will make them prone to radical beliefs. After we identify the ‘suspects’, we are taken through measures and steps which can assist teachers in the prevention of radicalisation among students. Mr Simons struggles to make it work on the smartboard so the boys in turn go to the laptop and they do the test. While going through the questions they laugh and note that they sound stupid. Mr Simons turns to me and asks me what I think. I tell him that I think that the test does seem rather useless. I also believe that trying to prove that everyone and anyone could be radicalised, stressing that it is not only ethnic people, in a sense targets Muslim communities. It fails to acknowledge some of the profiling that happens in the media, I say. Both boys agree and Alex reiterates that Muslims are largely targeted. Both of them take the test and they print out their own certificate. They now have the power and authority (if not even

⁹ He shows the pupils this test:

http://course.ncalt.com/Channel_General_Awareness/01/index.html

the responsibility) to report those who might be vulnerable to radicalisation. Mr Simons tells them that if they want to they can just redo the test and print out more copies, or change their answers.

It is worrying that the policies in place seem to be almost irrelevant for teachers and are treated as such. The ad-hoc nature of the testing process and the fact that Mr Simons depicts it as such, could show that its purpose might be undermined not only in this school but more widely. It was difficult not to share in the annoyance Mr Simons felt with the test or with the amusement of Alex and Simon when they saw the test.

Notions of Britishness

Those living on the islands of Britain have always struggled to define what Britishness is, Richardson writes (2015). The problematics of such identifications arise because whereas a Scottish, Irish, and Welsh identity is very much outlined the English one is very much not. It is often used interchangeably with Britishness, which usually serves as an identifying term. A closer look on what constitutes Britishness/ Englishness and how identifications are formed, as well as their use as empty signifiers at times, perhaps unlike other nations, can pose problems as it makes it more difficult to accept others. This uncertainty can make one's identity prone to oblivion and if any unknown elements try to infiltrate it, they are branded as foreign, creating further divisions.

Perhaps the fact that Britain has not found a clear position in the world stage after the Empire (Richardson, 2015) is what makes Britishness rather undetermined. As Gilroy (2004: 6) suggests 'It seems we are now condemned to work upon ourselves in conformity with the iron laws of mechanical culture just to hold our imperiled and perennially unstable identities together'. As a nation, Gilroy continues, there is a fixation on the lack of substance when it comes to national culture and identity and this is what has shaped the postimperial polity. The anxiety associated with the loss of Empire has transformed Britishness into

a mixture of guilt and pride which translate into a melancholia for what is now lost and the difficulty to reestablish the nation as a major player in world events. However, as Johnson (2002) argues Britishness cannot be an end in itself; it is just one trait with which people might identify themselves. People tend to have multiple points of identification, and forcing this idea of Britishness will not serve as a uniting point; perhaps quite the opposite.

Father Clarke was also involved in producing the document which outlined the policy of the school in relation to the promotion of FBV; however, he was very critical of the rhetoric and criticised the political aspect of their introduction; a government eager to show they were taking steps to safeguard the citizens from the dangerous Other as he described it.

Well, I want to question what British Values are actually because I think there is a political agenda behind it and I think we have to ask ourselves two questions, I think. One, to what extent are BV distinct from the inherent country's values of Christianity; and secondly to what extent are BV different from the values of 18th century Enlightenment, which were of course in a secularised form of the Christian values. So, these values which we have in Britain are actually distinct from values people have in France or Germany? [...] there is a big push from this terrible government to get us to talk more about BV and British identity. I am not quite sure what they mean by that, you know. In Britain classically we are tolerant, I think generally speaking this is true. Respectful and so on. But is this so different from elsewhere?

Iro: They are tolerant, I am not sure they allow for integration to happen though. I don't know what your thoughts are on that.

Father Clarke: Well it is a little like the chicken and the egg, isn't it? Because in the late 60s the buzz word was integration and so on but it hasn't quite worked. And it is not just, to use the jargon, the host community. It is actually groups coming from other countries who have not particularly wanted to integrate, particularly, and I am not going to beat about the bush. A particular number of those were Muslims who did not want to integrate, there is a lot of cloudy language on this. And there was a lot of reaffirmations and people's individual heritage and so on, whereby it was a very positive thing to reaffirm identity from Kenya or somewhere else in Africa or India or whatever. So, we seemed to want integration but then seemed to want people to affirm their identities as well. [...] I don't think people here queue up to show how British they are.

Father Clarke referred to the problem of how host communities and those who came to the country have never properly understood what is meant by integration. Both communities seemed to want integration, in the sense that Muslim or West Indian or other groups of people felt British but this did not mean that they wanted to forgo their original identities. At the same time, the host community felt that this would pose a threat to how those migrants would adjust and adapt to a different culture. As Father Clarke observed identity affirmation and identity politics, both contested terms, have been used over the years by various governments attempting to either defend or accuse integration for the various issues facing communities.

Iro: So, if you cannot explain what BV are, how can students do that?

Father Clarke: I am sure they don't. Well, they might be slightly whimsical about it, but not entirely whimsical. One might say

that, of course, in a classically British way, British Values are not sharply defined, like our constitution, it is not 1,2,3, 4, 5. So, I think there is a little bit of truth in that. If you are talking about knowledge of how Britain works, it is not quite the same thing as tests on British citizenship and so on. I can tell you in the past, when we were doing our RS GCSEs I gave them questions on British Citizenship and they made up most of the answers. And they are 16-year olds.

Father Clarke identified a lot of points which could be challenging introduction of FBV. The term British creates problems in the sense that there is a muddled perception of the BV which can also be characterised as Christian, European, or stemming from the Enlightenment. The criticism that FBV are not just British had been a recurring one – both from pupils and staff. Also, he identified the issues which had been historically problematic among migrant communities in the UK, as groups of people who moved to the UK after colonialism did not or could not integrate. In the excerpt below he alluded to his personal experience while growing up as the child of immigrants. He suggested that a lot of the ideas of what Britain represented were based on the fact that Britain was a world power, having managed to build an Empire. During the discussion, he also suggested that all migrants were forced to believe that, regardless of their own experiences, certain narratives of what the Empire had done to their country, and they were prompted to almost forget their own country's histories in favour of the British one. He believed that unless such issues were acknowledged and resolved it was naïve to believe that integration would be achieved through promotion of British Values. Another point was that indeed the idea of Britishness had always been characterised by a haziness – you cannot just ask people to start talking about Britishness and British values and expect them to pinpoint specific issues, Britishness has always been an almost unidentified term. In their majority, the pupils could indeed identify what the British Values were, but their reiteration of them seemed a repetition of what they had been

taught rather than show any real ability in explaining the substance of these terms or how the discussion below, on Britishness, will show, why or how Britishness is defined through these values.

Giving his personal account of how he experienced Britishness, Father Clarke continued:

My father was from the West Indies, and my mum English and I was born in the 50s, but I was brought very much as with what I would call the Ladybird narrative of history. I was just brought up and Britain was the centre of absolutely everything, all the good things were British, all the best artists were British. That's how it was. [...] My sister who is younger than I, will be far more culturally aware of the West Indian culture. By the time she went to school the guilt trip had settled in and there were no more Ladybird books.

According to him, Britishness is so subtly described because there is a guilt attached to it. Perhaps Father Clarke's own heritage made it more complicated how BV were perceived by him and perhaps as an extension by those who might have similarly intricate life histories. He suggested that not everyone would be overtly vocal about their Britishness because of the associations with the Empire. Whereas in the 1950s it was acceptable to be proud and put at the centre all things British, there had been a shift in political correctness. Even though people would not easily admit it, the Empire did some awful things and not many people want to associate themselves with this excessive pride, a reminiscent of colonialism. According to Father Clarke this could be a potential reason why people in general, and the pupils at the school in particular, might choose to identify with their Englishness rather than Britain. He believed that connotations of colonialism associated with Britain, often made people weary of their own associations. Talking more specifically about the pupils at the school, he believed there was genuine lack of awareness when separating England from

Britain. The feelings toward either were not very strong because of the guilt aspect but also because it was representative of Britain to not show enthusiasm about anything: including one's country.

Who is British?

At the initial stages of the research, Mr Jones thought it would be easier for both myself and the pupils if they only had to answer a questionnaire rather than having individual interviews. Therefore, we gave some sixth formers a very long open-ended questionnaire,¹⁰ which most of them completed, but gave very brief and often one-word answers. One of the questions which seemed to get their attention, however, was what they defined as British, as most of them chose to answer this question, while leaving most others blank. Their answers involved a lot of stereotypes: drinking tea, saying thank you and please, or liking the Queen, among others. Therefore, I wanted to understand how they categorised Britishness and Englishness beyond such labels.

Mr Adams, Head of Politics, described what he believed the pupils think of Britain as a collective of countries and whether they had pride in the fact they are from this country. This quote comes from a discussion on how he believed the pupils would be voting in the EU referendum in 2016.

If there were asked to leave the EU now, before they get the relevant facts they would probably say ‘yes’. They do consider Britain to be somehow better than other countries. In two ways, I guess. One is because in History they see that it managed to avoid some of the things other countries did, like Hitler. And it has done pretty well economically and is still a very strong

¹⁰ I discuss this more in the chapter on methodology. Also, see appendix 2 for a full list of the questions.

economy. A lot of these opinions again come from the parents, who express such opinions at home.

Mr Adams' opinion seemed to resonate with what other staff were saying, about pupils forming opinions through parents but also about the fact that they considered the UK somehow better financially and more socially stable than other countries. This was the impression I got during my observations of History and Politics classes and the various discussions on the topic. One such example was their belief that a far greater number of refugees were applying for asylum in the UK, than what was the reality. Although there was recognition that the UK was, in reality, not taking anywhere near as many refugees as other countries, there was a tendency to think that there were many refugees living an ideal life in the UK, because of the welfare system in place. A lot of the views came, presumably, from the media and depictions of certain discourses, which portrayed the UK as a noble country in that respect.

However, when the pupils were explicitly asked during interviews settings whether they considered Britain or England to be better compared to other countries, they expressed a very moderate opinion in how they viewed their country, always asserting their belief in equality. I describe it as their country because even though some pupils had one parent from another country, they were all in essence, British citizens and had never lived anywhere out of the UK. I include an example from my field notes to show how such discussions occurred.

Diary Entry: November 2015, Politics class

This is a Politics class, with Lower Sixth pupils and Mr Simons is discussing multiculturalism. The discussion moves to the Calais refugee camp and how Britain is not actually doing enough to help with the crisis. This is usually a hectic class, where everyone shouts out things, mainly in an attempt to wind Mr Simons up. Somehow Jonathan manages to get his voice

heard: 'Yes, but we cannot let everyone in. Everyone wants to come here.' And why do you think this is?, asks Mr Simons. 'Our economy is much better than all other countries. This is why there are so many immigrants here'. And do you think this is a bad thing?, presses Mr Simons. 'Well, not really, but a lot come here for the benefits, and take a lot of jobs which could go to British people.'. The discussion dissents into chaos again, as the class is torn between those who believe that migrants help the economy and those who think that they are a burden on the state.

The belief that the UK economy, and the welfare state, or the NHS were so much better than in other countries was common in some of my discussions with the pupils. Therefore, I would argue that even though they rarely explicitly expressed ideas of patriotism or showed potent ideas of Britishness, some of the beliefs they expressed showed that they felt that the UK was standing in a somewhat better position than other countries.

Who can be British?

Alex and Simon in Mr Simon's Politics class, were the two pupils with whom I would discuss the various ideas other students had expressed. They were both widely read and able to express opinions on a wide range of topics. I wanted to see their opinions on the discussion I included above. Alex agreed with the fact that Britain is a very economically prosperous country, and compared to the other EU countries it is one of the strongest economies. He disagreed on the points made by other students on the UK doing enough with relation to humanitarian crisis on the ground. As he described it:

they are good at sending money but not helping when the going gets tough, but you cannot always just throw money at everything

With this in mind, both said they used England for certain things and Britain for others. Sports, which will be discussed later, is England and when they mess up is Britain. Although this comment was made with some sarcasm, the view that sports is one of the strongest points of identification was prominent through various discussions.

The students in their majority seemed very open to who could claim to be British. They did not feel that this is a term which was solely kept for those who were born in the country. Mr Simons, who was always eager to direct the discussions to Britishness and British values, mainly for my benefit, raised the point of liberalism in relation to Britishness with Alex and Simon during a Politics class.

Mr Simons: What would you say to someone who is from a different culture but says they are British?

Alex: I would think, if they think they are British, then I would think they are British.

Mr Simons: Exactly. This is what liberalism is about, allowing people to self-identify. If they think they are British, then this should be good enough.

Liberalism as an ideology was often repeated at the school: being open to others and accepting of difference. The term was also used to showcase acceptance with regards to one's idea of the nation. However, there remained the question of what makes someone British.

Diary Entry: January 2016, *assembly*

The Head of Year 8 organised an assembly where the pupils would have to present what they understood by Britishness. The school was trying its hardest to prove that they were engaged with the theme of Britishness and British Values. The pupils duly followed what the teachers had taught them and showcased Britain as the land of tea from India, jerk food from the Caribbean, Nando's from Portugal or Mozambique or South Africa; an amalgam from different cultures which have settled in the country acting as a reminder mainly of the colonial past. The whole presentation lasted less than five minutes, even though there were more than twenty students on the stage. The students were holding placards and they were taking it in turns to say what they believed was British. I doubted that this display would help deepen their understanding of what is British. It seemed to me that by repeating platitudes, it is difficult to question why certain things are perceived to be so. I asked the teacher who organized this if there was a follow up to this, or a more in-depth discussion of what they just presented but she said no. She did not have the time to talk to me then, so we agreed to talk at some other time. I went back to Mr Jones' office and said that this was not particularly helpful, a little makeshift perhaps. He shrugged. I am not sure if this was a tick-box exercise to prove they engage with British Values, but I don't mention this to Mr Jones.

Tariq, was one of the three Muslim students in Sixth Form. It proved very difficult to find him and talk to him because his attendance was very poor and at the time he was retaking the year. I asked him whether he identified as British since his family moved to the UK just before he was born:

I have never had any problems. I have never seen myself as having an identity crisis. I see myself as being British and being Muslim. It is one and the same thing. Living in Britain provides you with a lot of freedom. I accept that I am from Pakistan – I love it to bits and I have family there. But I consider myself British because I was born here.

Whether I have any issues at the school. In my RS class we debate about very different things, not the fact that people cannot accept that I am a Muslim. In Politics the same. I think people are entitled to their opinions, it is fine if they do that. In this school, I have never found it difficult here. I don't really pray during the day, but a few times when I wanted to pray I went there and the Chaplain was more than happy to let me do that. He told me 'you don't have to ask, this is the house of God.' And if anyone wanted to come to a mosque and see if there are any extremist views they would be welcome to do that, we are very open. But people never do that, they would not come and see what we teach. They would only say we don't like British values, we like them, but we have the Quran which teachers these values as well.

Tariq discussed the fluidity of identities: you can identify with multiple identities, with British being one of them. However, he also discussed how the term British values could be contested as he believed the same values were taught in the Quran. Therefore, he suggested that in the same way that Britain was inviting people to share their values, those who are from different religious or social backgrounds could try to understand Muslim values, and perhaps find commonalities.

The nation through sports

Students' idea of the nation was rather blurred. During a focus group, I asked students to say the first thing that comes to mind as to where they were from.

Matthew shouted 'Britain'. I asked for a reason why not England. 'You didn't offer it as an option'. I pointed out that I did not offer any options. 'Well, they are kind of the same'.

The blurred lines of nationhood were often talked about during interviews or in class. However, one of the main elements that both students and staff put at the centre of what defines Englishness was sport. When asked when they would say they are English, they would reply at instances of sport. It somehow depended on which team was doing better before they decided whether to say England or Britain, but sport was a marker of nationhood. As they mentioned in the History focus group, if there was a match, for example, between Scotland and England, they would choose England. The registrar, Mr Long, focused on this point as well:

I think if you ask them, a lot of them, would say, some of them would say British. Or would say English, not because they come from England, but maybe because they speak English. I suppose so.

His idea of speaking the language or being born in the country were two points which had also surfaced during interviews with the pupils.

Iro: Do they care about history or culture though? Like in Cyprus and Greece we have extremely high admiration for our past and what there has been achieved.

Mr Long: Some of them do. And they can be very partisan about for example, sport, which is a great unifying thing. Not in the same way, they wouldn't necessarily be that partisan about the English history, but there are certain things. Certain things that would make them feel maybe English, but the school itself here, has a history, it has some traditions and for them it is nice to say they go to a very old school with very old traditions. But I don't think they would identity as strongly as some other nations I have come across. I go to rowing championships every year, and if you look at Germans they are very, they are German through and through. Cut them and they will bleed German flag. It's not so much.

Iro: But why not?

Mr Long: I think we will need to drum up a bit further and add some nationalism.

Iro: And you are not doing that?

Mr Long: No, and that's the good thing. If you start drumming that up too much, then you get polarisation starting to appear. And then that leads to trouble. I have, my heritage is Irish. [he goes into some length to explain what problems this causes over Christmas and other family]. But then again it is something so ingrained. Ingrained by their birth and religion and has been drummed into them. I think if they were asked to support someone, they would support their country, whether it is England or Britain. But this is kind of hard, because Britain exists for some things and England, Scotland and Wales exist for something else. So that's kind of, so I think if they try to relate. I mean sport is a big thing for kids. I mean if you ask they will be 'yeah, I support England because I am English'. But you

know it is Britain for the Olympics. But is it really Britain? Because it is made up of 4 different things. I mean, it's quite, doesn't have the fervour that other countries have. But I don't think this is a bad thing. It teaches them, it gives them a better position to be in. Because it allows them to take a broader view. And particularly here the kids are very accepting of all sorts. Whether it is nationality, religion, and I think that is a positive rather than forcing something down their throat. Because whether it is nationalism or something else, it is not a good place to be.

Mr Long raised several interesting issues, both in relation to how pupils identify so intently with national teams and how they seemed to be a focal point to their nationality. Even more interestingly, however, he seemed to provide an interchangeable way of talking about nationalism associated with sport and religion, almost on the same level. It can also be suggested that Mr Long's comments allude to the discussion on the post-imperial melancholia and perhaps the Empire leaving some feelings of shame; therefore, too much pride is not encouraged.

On the topic of nationality and sport Mr Adams had very similar views. When asked what distinctions the students made between England and Britain his response was:

They identify with England at this age. And you know they are all rugby boys, South West London, right?

His belief was that sport was a determining factor. However, I felt that this view mainly came from a male perspective. It was the boys who played rugby, cricket and football. Boys were mainly involved with these sports and it was one of the

main preoccupations they had. The girls barely mentioned sport as a focal point in their understanding of their country, or their everydayness for that matter. Perhaps they would watch the World Cup and support England, or they would do rowing at school, as they mentioned, but their interest in sport apart from that was very limited. Therefore, it can be suggested that the nature of affiliation to the country had a very gendered rhetoric and a focus which had an almost one-dimensional understanding.

What does being tolerant entail?

Britishness is often seen as an amalgamation of different cultures, whereas as Clarke and Garner (2010) argue it is often the case that white nationals identify with their nation more, which makes the term English almost affiliated to ethnicity. This is why attaching oneself to England and Englishness might acquire a rather privileged status. However, it could be argued that England is characterised by an Anglocentric classed nature identified by privilege. Whites, Lewis (2014) mentions, do not view their racialised nature as a group-defining trait, and this is what leads to distinctions of whiteness, their collectivity is more passive and not so obviously perceived.

Britain is usually described as a welcoming country where people can live by their own faiths and cultures, which is ultimately what the government is trying to do with the FBV. However, it was not only the teachers but also the pupils who opposed the teaching of FBV. The majority of them, as shown in their responses, believed that they infringe on free speech and how people can express themselves in relation to their beliefs. As Simon mentioned *‘if we carry on like this, we will end up like the French’*. Alex, Simon and Mr Simons were discussing British Values in a Politics class, when Simon mentioned ending up like the French, implying that they are not as tolerant, since there was a discussion on the ban of the niqab the day before.

Mr Simons: So why did they ban the niqab in France?

Alex: This was for security reasons, so they can identify people.

Mr Simons: Is that really the reason? Actually, this is not the case. That's not why they banned it. They banned it in schools. They've banned all external religious symbols in schools. So they banned large crosses, and Orthodox rings and Jewish symbols. And the top hat. So they banned distinctively religious attire. So why have they done this in France? What is it about France? Think back to the French revolution. Secularism, attitudes toward the Catholic church.

Alex: Rationalism.

Mr Simons: So in France they are able to say we have a consciously secular education system. And they actually ban the wearing of the niqab in public. And you'd think this is a bad thing, right? In Britain we have British Values, we have toleration so we should tolerate this?

Both pupils and Mr Simons commented that the law which banned people from wearing religious attire was not very tolerant and did not belong to a country which was proud of her tolerance and welcoming nature. Therefore, this should not be the case with Britain, which is a secular yet tolerant country, which allowed for expressions of one's beliefs. However, problems could arise when this religion stifles one's individual freedoms.

Alex: I think with the British Values we should believe in the freedom of women.

Mr Simons: They can choose how they wish to dress. But are they actually choosing?

Alex: I think Muslim women are not choosing, the things they wear are being forced upon them by their culture. It is not specifically mentioned in their religion.

Mr Simons: Okay, so it is a cultural thing not a religious thing.

Alex: There are some passages that can be interpreted as religious recommendation.

Mr Simons: So there are passages that can be interpreted as it being necessary. There is this debate whether the state should be interfering in what people wear, yes? What is the speech that May is going to make?¹¹

As had often been the case in discussions of religion and individual freedoms, gender was at the forefront of who is victimised. Here, women were as seen as not being given the choice of attire. Moreover, the blurring between culture and religion was seen in the discussion above, perhaps stemming from the fact that a secular country such as England, did not have the same beliefs. There was a very unclear distinction as to whether it was cultural or religious practices which dictated behaviour; however, it was almost as if FBV could solve issues of oppression amongst those of other faiths and cultures. I did not think there was any doubt that Alex meant well when he asked for women to be given more freedom, something which could be achieved in the UK. However, the lack of knowledge of what other cultures might view as individual choice might cause confusion and misunderstandings. In Western cultures liberty to wear what a woman wants is seen as a fundamental right; however, the relationship between religion and gender can be more nuanced in other cultures and religions. Therefore, it is difficult to assess whether FBV can contribute at all to such complex connections.

¹¹ Speech given by the then Home Secretary Theresa May in March 2015. For full text: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-stronger-britain-built-on-our-values> [accessed August 2017].

Back in the Politics class, we started discussing immigration in relation to British Values.

(on what statement May, at the time Home Secretary, will make)

Alex: That mass immigration brings very little economic benefits and also that it is a threat to losing social cohesiveness.

Mr Simons: What do you understand by ‘social cohesiveness’?

Alex: She says that if you have mass migration, there will be a loss of British Values which means you don't have, you have a loss of British Values which means people, you don't have, everyone has different values so it is difficult to create a cohesive nation-state. So this puts pressure on the nation-state and you end up damaging it.

Mr Simons: I think the point she is trying to make, this is all pre-released, is that mass migration poses more of a challenge to the cohesion of society, rather than controlled limited immigration. Particularly mass migration of those who have cultural values that appear significantly different from those of that are pre-existing. There was a programme, a bit of a Mickey Mouse programme, and it was asking about racism in Britain. And they had 3 people walking around areas where there weren't many ethnic minorities. So there was a Jewish guy, and a black guy and they had an Asian woman walking around in a headscarf and the same Asian woman walking around with a niqab. And the reaction to her, there was no reaction at all, as an Asian woman in headscarf but this is obviously not scientific. But there was hostile reaction when she was wearing the niqab. Like people going past in cars shouting ‘get out’. And they did this other experiment where they were giving out free

doughnuts, whilst wearing a headscarf, a niqab, a black guy and a Jewish guy. Guess who gave all their doughnuts first.

Alex and Simon: The Jewish guy.

Mr Simons: Err no.

Alex and Simon: The woman in the headscarf.

Mr Simons: Yes. Who was the slowest?

Alex and Simon: The woman in the niqab.

Mr Simons: Yes. The point is it took more than twice as long. Now why? This is not scientific, just thinking about it.

Simon: If you cannot see someone's face, then you don't trust them.

Alex: If you can't see the face, there is something about the unknown.

Mr Simons: I think this is a very valid point. And I think if you read psychology it might tell you something. But that's where, how much of an acceptance of toleration should there be? As I say, in France they have a different perception.

Mr Simons and Alex concluded that the unknown face, much like the unknown Other, is seen as a threat to society. There was little robust evidence or scientific evidence provided by the programme, and Mr Simons described it as a Mickey Mouse programme, describing the people who participated as part of comedy programme, although at the same time trying to make a point that appearances matter. Religious attire mattered in how we perceived others, as Mr Simons and the two boys pointed out. Therefore, even though the UK is described as tolerant

country, perhaps practising tolerance is more nuanced than saying one is tolerant.

Conclusion

Following the overarching question throughout the chapters, there has always been the latent issue on how much tolerance is shown by the pupils and the school. When does this tolerance become too much and there needs to be a more muscular approach, in the words of David Cameron? This chapter has discussed the introduction of the teaching of British Values in schools, and the criticism this has drawn across the school, both from pupils and teachers. One of the main themes examined has been the blurred understanding of what constitutes Britishness and Englishness and what elements can be described as defining the two concepts; sport being prominent amongst those discussed. The chapter concluded by showing that even though the UK has always asserted of its tolerance towards those of other cultures and faiths, the assertion that FBV are the way to ensure cohesion risks to alienate different groups of people. As shown in the review of the debates on tolerance, there is the risk of tolerance taking the form of not tolerating intolerance rather than being tolerant yourself. It can be suggested, therefore, that the nuanced relationships between the cultures which co-exist in the UK should be given more attention if true tolerance can be shown. The next chapter will continue with the discussion of divisions stemming from ethnic differences and discuss how race and racism are discussed and perceived within St Aber's and Mawerley.

Chapter Six

Discussing Race and Racism in a White Bubble

Questions of race and racism in an (almost) all-white context posed their own problems: both because the participants involved deny the existence of racism and are seemingly welcoming of the Other and because the lack of the Ethnic Other makes it hard to challenge one's (in)tolerance. This chapter argues that racial inequalities which persist are not always manifested through racist rhetoric but can be seen in apathy or by creating spaces which exclude certain cultures while valorising others. By constructing white pockets which view the dominant culture as the most valued, those with different skin colour and culture are excluded, and whiteness is solidified as the norm. Therefore, discussions of race revolve not only around skin colour but also cultural practices, colour blindness and tolerance, the teaching of the Empire, and seeking multicultural capital. The

chapter will also look at questions of integration and tolerance as discussed by various participants; through the intersectionality of race with class and gender.

Moving beyond the discourses of whether one is British or English or whether there should be diversity, this chapter argues that we are now in a post-national era; young people do not try to define nations through old concepts, such as citizenship vs statelessness (Ong 2006). They value the assemblage of the various communities and are more open to diversity; however, media depictions of unregulated migrations and threats by the Other still make them reluctant to be as liberal as they seem to believe they are. I would argue that it is not what happens at the school which affects such ideas but broader social factors, ie. the Leave campaign, sensationalist media depicting migrants as a threat to the labour market (and especially to young people), terror attacks which happened in European countries, but most importantly the lack of the Ethnic Other in the wider locale where they live.

Racial segregation as a deliberate process

It has been widely argued that racism is systemic in the sense that it acts as a means to maintain white privilege, education being one of the main arenas where such inequalities are sustained. As such it is utilised to ensure that the benefits are given to some by virtue of their skin colour (Song 2013). Overall, the discourse of colour blindness and the legislation which has criminalised ethnic and racial discrimination has led to a transformation of racism; creating new forms of racism, showcased through cultural racism (ibid.). Lewis (2003) acknowledges that in the US a lot of parents would rather send their children to an all-white school, which creates all-white areas. In some of the schools mentioned less than 1% of the school cohort are non-white pupils. This racial segregation in suburbs and schools is far from accidental.

They are a creation of the racial order in the US. They are not the result of an accidental process but of a deliberate operation fuelled by private and public policies that sought to create “safe” (white) communities separate from the urban “terror zone.” The current invisibility of this history—the pervasive sense that neighbourhoods just happen to be all white— is closely connected to general amnesia about even relatively recent racial history (ibid.: 28).

However, the same is less likely to apply in the UK. Such obvious segregating practices are not valued as such. It is increasingly becoming the norm for parents to want their children to mix with other cultures, in an attempt to gain multicultural capital (Reay et al. 2007). It can also be argued that in such an ethnically diverse place such as London, it would be almost impossible for such a division to exist. In this sense, racial and ethnic discrimination is now seen through what is deemed important in cultural significance and is valued in everyday practices. Racism is not only seen through colour but more subtly through ethnicity, religion, and culture, with instances of what is seen as different often mocked and deemed of less ‘value’ by those who are part of the dominant racial culture.

An example of this was when Mr Simons decided to show the pupils the documentary *Welcome to the Mosque*, a BBC documentary showing the lives of Muslims in London’s East End. The documentary filmmaker was given great access to the workings of both the mosque but also the lives of the people in one of the largest Muslim communities in London. This was an Upper Sixth class of Politics, with Alex and Simon. Mr Simons was stopping the documentary from time to time, mainly focusing on the instances when the participants were expressing their experiences of racism, when they first moved to London or as they were growing up as first-generation immigrants. Both pupils condemned such actions – by shaking their heads or muttering ‘*this is terrible*’. They also commented, however, that speaking the language of the country you moved to

was very important, so they believed that perhaps that had been part of the problem. Otherwise, they mentioned you cannot integrate and become a functional citizen. Alex mentioned that if you do not integrate:

you end up resenting the country or creating these little bubbles
in your own community.

I mentioned this very much resembled their little bubble in Mawerley. So perhaps maybe the people wanted to have these close communities because it made them feel safer. Alex responded that the core difference was that by having an all-white school or area would not promote isolation and at times extremism. It is in these communities that people develop an interest to join ISIS. I replied that this is an overgeneralisation and there could not always be proof of that. They agreed, and Alex said that it was more probable, it did not mean it will definitely happen.

I thought this exchange resembled the depictions of communities which create hate towards the natives that were sometimes portrayed in the media. For example, it was almost an allusion to the rhetoric of the former Prime Minister, David Cameron, that there should be integration of the different communities and they should not isolate themselves as this can result to extremism. Throughout the documentary, the students seemed interested in what was being portrayed, even though their knowledge was somewhat limited of the area and the way such communities work, or how faith can be embedded so much in everyday life. As was the case, the Christian ethos of the school did not shape their lives in similar ways. Therefore, religion played a very small part in their lives, as in their majority they not would identify with any particular religion. Only a few of the pupils said that they were religious or that they attended church every Sunday with their families. However, as the documentary started addressing issues which the students could resonate with, such as relationships, they had more comments to make. This was where differences in cultural understandings became more prominent.

A young Muslim man (around 18) was discussing how he was keen to have a wife but the process of finding a wife is different in his Muslim community: mixing of genders is not acceptable, you cannot talk to girls you do not know, and if there are girls in a place where you are it is not advisable for you to start talking to them or start socialising with them, according to the young man. As he mentioned, this can lead to other problems, such as having sexual relations before marriage with different women. He mentioned that engaging in ‘free-mixing’ (hanging around girls) was morally wrong, so, contemplating sexual relations out of wedlock was simply unthinkable.

So, how does one go about finding a woman? asked the filmmaker.

There is a service at the mosque, you fill in your details, your interests, what you are looking for in a woman and the service arranges for you to meet someone that they deem suitable, the young man replied.

Throughout the narration and the exchange of questions Alex and Simon looked at each other and were giggling. *This is ridiculous*, said Simon when he heard that there is a service to arrange a partner for you. The documentary showed the couple (the young man and the prospective wife that was found for him, and they both seemed content). However, this stark difference in what was considered normal – the division between Western and Muslim practices – led to a culturally different practice labelled as ridiculous; with less value attached to it. Mr Simons paused the documentary again and asked Simon why he thought that was so unfathomable.

Simon: Surely they are just oppressed like this. This is not what happens in modern societies. And this is not good for women

either. This is like sexism, separating men and women. And having someone choose your wife, what is this?

I thought that this resonated with Alexander's (2002) remarks that Asian, or other cultures which are different to Western ones, have been seen as anachronistic, collective, pre-modern. In this sense, Asian cultures are seen as 'distinct from wider national cultures and are therefore not represented within it, or are positioned as an alien threat to it' (ibid.: 564). Undeniably, a boy who had grown up in a liberal Western family could view these practices as anachronistic, based on his own beliefs and standards. However, retrospectively, perhaps myself or Mr Simons could have pointed out in class that this practice was not restricting in and by itself. Alex's beliefs that this was sexist or oppressive might be true, but this would be from a Western perspective. However, this could question whether those who are part of and dictate the popular culture, in the UK, are in practice, and not only in theory, tolerant of other practices. By placing little value on different practices, almost denying their significance, and by dismissing them without trying to truly understand them, might be a way of promoting and sustaining intolerance. Or it could create the circumstances for the various communities to occupy unequal places in society, and as a result, cause divisions.

Colour blindness

Lewis (2003) refers to the participants in her study and their denial that race mattered, as they failed to see how race played a role in their everyday practices, beliefs, attitudes and understandings. Lewis argues that this is due to the way that racial ideologies are transmitted through social and political struggles and are never individual issues but part of collective understandings. She uses Gramsci and his theory on 'wars of position' (ibid.: 32). Such ideologies manage to facilitate collective domination and render vast inequalities (whether these stem from class, gender, and/or race) as acceptable and incontestable. Both those at the top and the bottom learn to live with them, thus perpetuating structural

inequalities. These narratives represent the social reality and are not fabricated nor exaggerated; however, they are interpretations of the social hierarchy through the realities of the dominant group.

It can also be argued that in relation to race, the UK seems to showcase a certain kind of amnesia in relation to the racial history of the island, which can be linked to the idea of colour blindness. It could be suggested that in relation to the colonial past of Britain, people could be more aware of how race has impacted on the lives of people both at the former colonies and those who migrated here. However, this does not seem to be the case.

Uniformly, the participants in my study proclaimed that race did not matter, they did not see colour, they were all very liberal, very open, and would love to have more people from different ethnic backgrounds in the school. Stemming from these proclamations, I asked the pupils if they believed that colour did not matter to them because it had never caused them any problems in their lives and was never the basis for inequality, nor had it ever been a point of discussion because it carried so few negative memories. They all seemed a little puzzled with this question so no one in particular gave a response. They responded that this was not something they had thought about.

While discussing integration in a Politics class, Mr Simons asked me to give my own opinion on the topic. I said that I thought that race did not matter to them because they had the 'right' colour. A colour which would open doors and would rarely get them stopped at airports. I explained how if they were black youth, they would be stopped by police in the street a lot more than now, which was probably never. I thought they did not pay attention to colour because they did not need to, both because they had a privileged life and because they never really interacted with people with different skin colour. I realised that was probably too harsh on them but at times I could not really comprehend how tolerance could be so widely discussed when there was so little to tolerate. Simon disagreed by saying that he went to a state primary school and there were more

ethnic people there.

Iro: Are you still friends with any of them or do any of your family socialise with any people who are not white?

Simon: Well no, but I left the school a long time ago and we have moved since.

The whiteness of the area was cited frequently as a factor why pupils would have so little contact with people from different ethnic backgrounds. This was one of the contributing factors why I believed studying Mawerley in conjunction with St Aber's was vital in order to understand how the school was structured. During a History focus group, I asked the same questions around integration and the whiteness of the school and the area. Hugo, one of the Upper Sixth boys, mentioned that he did some sports training outside the school, where the people were much more diverse compared to the school's cohort.

Iro: So do you socialise with the people you train with out of the training hours?

Hugo: Erm, no, not really. There is never really any time. After the training, I have to do other things.

This statement did not imply that Hugo would have a problem being friends with people from different ethnic backgrounds. However, the whiteness of both Mawerley and St Aber's meant that there was very little contact with people from other ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the students conducted most of their social activities within this middle-class, white bubble, which the school also represented. This could potentially render it more difficult both to have meaningful interactions with the Other and have in-depth awareness of cultural differences.

The Empire as a noble act

It could be argued that colour blindness in Britain is also linked to the history of

the Empire. As Ahmed (2010) argues despite the violence and shame that such a project should have brought back home, it is remembered in wholly different terms; it is seen as an attempt to educate the natives (in the colonies) and teach them good (white) habits which would eventually make them happy; something they could not achieve themselves in their savage ways. As Ahmed notes 'race politics in the UK involves not only a direct inheritance of this history but a social obligation to remember the history of empire as a history of happiness' (ibid.: 130). The cruel ways that were utilised (Moore 2014) are rarely mentioned or they are ignored.

In the context of a school, the curriculum hardly acknowledges the atrocities that were conducted in order to 'civilise' the natives of the colonies. I asked the Head of History, Mr Eliot, why even though private schools have more freedom when it comes to the curriculum they did not cover more of the Empire.

Mr Eliot: Well, there is not much to say. We cover the basics.

Iro: But don't you think you make it sound rather idealistic?
Avoiding the atrocities that happened?

Mr Eliot: Well, we don't hide that. I am sure that if students want to know more, they can ask or they can find information very easily.

The truth was that they could find information easily, but I would question how many of them actually did. Their views on this matter would largely come from what they were told at the school and perhaps take the facts given to them at face value. Even though a lot of them mentioned that they get their information from online sources, it could be contested whether information on the British Empire was a topic that they would actively seek information on.

During a focus group with the History class, the discussion on the

Empire started by me asking if they knew of any people who migrated to the UK as part of the Windrush or other member countries of the Commonwealth. Matthew jokingly said that his mother moved to the UK from Iran, when she was 13. Other students started laughing, so I coughed in an attempt to bring the discussion back to the topic of the Empire. Alex offered the clarification that Iran was not part of the Empire.

Matthew: Yeah Iran, I don't think it was ever actually part of the British empire but there was a lot of interest in the area. Yeah, I think they just got a lot of oil from the area.

Despite the seemingly lack of awareness whether Iran was part of the Empire or not, Matthew interestingly mentioned that Britain was probably interested in the area because of potential financial gains. This allowed me to follow up with the question whether they believed that the British colonised the different countries to their benefit or whether they believed the Empire had any negative effects.

Matthew: I think to free those oppressed some bad things happened. Like when we went to India we thought about that, like we did a lot of good to India.

[this was a reference to recent trip to India, as part of their partnership with an Indian school. St Aber's sends pupils from the Sixth Form there every year in an attempt to experience a different way of schooling, as the school is very poor, and try to help with fundraising for better facilities. It is called an exchange programme, but it is mainly students from St Aber's who go there, as the families have the financial means to fund this trip, whereas Indian children cannot afford the trip].

Alex: I've always thought that the British Empire was generally a bad thing. I think we oppressed so many people. But that thing in India, they loved it, because their textbooks are so positive about the British empire, they praise it.

Matthew: But the Ghandi museum.

Alex: Yes, the Ghandi museum was really bad but the actual books given at school they talk about how all the infrastructure that was built. But then we went to the Ghandi museum and it seemed they were quite anti-British, so it seems very split. It's quite strange, like I read some stuff which was really pro-British. They were quite happy about some stuff that had happened, but at the Ghandi museum they were really angry about it. It's quite a mix, I don't think, it is quite a mix result and you cannot really argue either way. Ultimately, it was repression but the way in which it was deescalated, it was rather good compared to how Belgium and France did it.

Matthew initially associated the Empire as freeing those who were oppressed, so by default as he said, some bad things had to happen for freedom to ensue. The image of the colonisers as noble liberators was pictured, with little acknowledgement that 'bad things' did not need to happen, since the countries might not actively want the help of Western powers. On the one hand, there was the admission that the people in India loved it and their textbooks praise the Empire, while almost dismissing the fact that the depictions at the Ghandi museum told a different story.

Talking about the Indian colonies felt a bit too far from home, a theme I had discussed with them before, so I thought I had to bring the discussion to something which might feel more concrete. I pointed out that I was from Cyprus, and I wouldn't say that my family found decolonisation particularly 'good'. I

mentioned that my grandad was involved in the war and from his stories, although there was not hatred for the British as colonisers, the war did not leave very good memories. The students remained quiet, and no one wanted to respond to this. I was not sure if they felt some guilt being confronted as such, or if they disagreed.

Matthew tried to lighten the mood:

You now live here, miss, so you can't dislike the British so much.

Iro: The truth is no, I don't, but I think the relationship is more complicated than me saying I like them or dislike them for what happened.

George and Elisa both had Irish parents, or at least one Irish parent; therefore, when they talked about the colonies they painted a less idealistic and more nuanced picture, especially when it came to the aftermath of the separation.

George: I am half Irish and the Irish have an interesting paradoxical relationship I think with the British, because obviously they've got lots of hostility still, especially with the famine and then only later getting independency. But then on the other hand so many of them migrated to London and there are huge Irish communities, especially in North West London. So, and they still, the IRA is recent history, so that's something I think in the Irish zeitgeist there is some anti- colonialism towards the British.

Elisa: I would agree with that in that, my mum's family went through a lot, and going back she actually, I have talked to my

mum quite a lot about this because I find it interesting, but she was born in England but then moved to Ireland so she has a very strong English accent. When she went over there, the feeling against Britain, and when was this like 1970s, very early 1980s, was very strong. She felt like there was a lot of tension between her and other students because of it. And they were like, she didn't have any Gaelic when she moved there when she was 10, and all the other students they would put her in front of the class and be like 'What does this mean, what does this mean?'. It was actually, she felt quite resentful about it. And even going there now, I did a couple of summer camps there and there was a lot of, it was weird, but I can see why. It is not something I would be cross about now, but it is this sort of tension I guess, which is weird.

Both George and Elisa talked about resentment, tensions, and anti-colonialism. This was not a foreign, far away land, but a place where their parents grew up or lived at some point in their lives. Their parents did not seem to share ideas of infrastructure or other civilising aspects of the British, but instead remembered the famine, or how they were singled out because of their accents. It would be difficult for them to argue that colonising Ireland was a noble act. The fact that people from the ex-colonies moved to the motherland and built communities could not always ignore the fact that there were still some hard feelings about the past and that the stories of the colonies were told in a slightly one-dimensional way.

It could be argued that it is at the backdrop of this resentment and tensions between colonised and colonisers, which still shape some of the relationships back in the homeland. However, to be a national citizen involves seeing the empire as a happy time, regardless of being a member of the

colonisers or the colonised (Ahmed, 2010). It both shows loyalty, as a migrant, and pride as a native. It is at times promoted as a rhetoric to show that the British are not a nation of bigots, something which has been proven by the happy diversity they showcased over the years of the Empire, by mixing and mingling with others (Phillips cited in Ahmed, *ibid.*). Therefore, when immigrants are asked to take the Citizenship test it is almost like they are asked to see it as a happiness test. 'To become British is to accept empire as the gift of happiness, which might involve an implicit injunction to forget or not to remember the violence of colonial rule' (*ibid.*: 131).

The white bubble

In the UK, in contrast to what was discussed about the US above, parents might find it more appealing sending their children to attend more mixed schools as this would help them become more culturally aware. This is not always because of the need to know how other cultures are formed or interact but it is part of the process of acquiring a multicultural capital. London being so multicultural itself would almost certainly mean that schools would have an ethnic mix. Therefore, the whiteness of St Aber's was somewhat unique.

The school, the pupils and the parents were aware of the 'problem' as had been described, and had been trying to think of ways to resolve it. It was, of course, difficult to admit that BAME students would not want to come to the school because of its whiteness. Mr Jones, along with the Head Master, had mentioned how the school would be delighted to have more BAME students. They felt that this was not beneficial to the students, or to the reputation of the school. This almost made diversity an asset, whereby gaining multicultural awareness made you almost more skilled.

Admittedly, cosmopolitanism has created the need and desire for an openness and appreciation towards social and cultural difference (Binnie et al. 2006). There is an orientation, 'a willingness to engage with the Other . . .

[entailing] an intellectual and aesthetic stance toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (Hannerz in Binnie et al. 2006: 7). Those who can afford to do so seek out new experiences which will both enhance their own cultural communities and allow them to break free from their cultural and social confines. It can be argued that embracing a global outlook is a highly desired trait in an increasingly interconnected world, as it enables the cosmopolites to become skilled in navigating and negotiating difference (ibid.). However, these skills are not afforded to everyone. 'Cosmopolitanism – as a set of skills or competencies – is an intrinsically classed phenomenon, as it is bound up with notions of knowledge, cultural capital and education: being worldly, being able to navigate between and within different cultures, requires confidence, skill and money' (Binnie et al. 2006: 8). The intersectionality of disadvantage means that this is not only a classed phenomenon but also a racialised one. Whites can easily dip in and out of different cultures, whereas this is not an option from those from the non-normative culture.

Reay et al. (2007) studied middle-class parents who had chosen multi-ethnic education for their children. This decision was partly due to their willingness to ensure that their children encountered those different from them, but also because that would work to their benefit as it would give them multicultural capital. However, even these liberal parents remained trapped in the privilege of whiteness. Despite being committed to multi-ethnic schooling they faced the 'perils of middle-class acquisitiveness, extracting value from, as they find value in, their multi-ethnic 'other' (ibid.: 1041). Through this othering of those who do not possess the same white middle-class values both the white and black working classes are 'residualised and positioned as excessive' (ibid.: 1042). This marks a difference between the white middle class from not only the ethnic Other but also with the classed white Other.

The parents in Reay et al.'s study valued multiculturalism in itself and they believed that the education they had chosen promoted the values they were

trying to instil in their children. They believed that they belonged to a particular fraction of the middle classes, one which both prides itself in its liberal values, while basking in the glow of cosmopolitan multiculturalism (ibid.). However, despite certain intrinsic values there is instrumental action when choosing certain practices, which ultimately add to the cultural capital. As Reay et al. (2007: 1045) describe it 'There is, however, an important difference in principle between the moral and conscious articulation of such 'valuings' and, on the other hand, holding them *in the knowledge* that (or even *because*) they gain an advantage vis-à-vis others'. Therefore, this proclaimed interest in the Other can be seen to stem from a self-interested altruism. They can enrich themselves through mixing with those different from them, by getting to know the 'real world' (ibid.). Therefore, value on other cultures was placed only up to the point where they could benefit the dominant culture.

Pupils at St Aber's would like to have more ethnic pupils around; however, they would not actively socialise with people different to them outside the school. They hoped that at university there would be a better mix. They were genuinely concerned with the whiteness of the school, but there was a common consensus that there was nothing that can be done and it depended on what you valued more. In my interview with Jonny, a drama and academic scholar in Upper Sixth, we discussed the school as a bubble, and how one-dimensional it was when it came to diversity. I asked if he believed that the school was doing enough to ensure there was diversity.

This is a good point. But I guess it hard for them, just by virtue of the fact that it is a private school and it is expensive. It's hard to be more than it is, which is a stupid thing to say. But it is hard for them to have a secure school. But a less secure school means that it might be a less white school, then your grades will be worse. So, it depends what you value in your education. I mean, I haven't thought about it. I guess it is one-sided in that you don't see every aspect of life, but nothing can show you that. So,

I don't resent the school for that because they have shown me so many other things. I think this is why I like university because it is going to allow me to immerse myself in a less secure, less safe situation, which I think is the best time for me to do it because as a child you want safety and security.

Jonny did not explain why a school with fewer white people would be less secure, although as I have discussed in the chapter on British Values, the Other can be seen as disturbing the normative status quo. Representations of the Other, in the media or the public rhetoric, have rendered it normal to believe that the ethnic Other might pose a threat to the security of the school or it might jeopardise the academic excellence of the pupils, despite the fact this has proven to be wrong.

Both pupils and staff seemed to believe that their school was safe and well-behaved by virtue of their upbringing, ethnicity and class. Through the discussions, I got the impression that they believed they were removed as a school and locale from the nastiness of other environments, by implication perhaps by those in poorer and more mixed areas. Mrs Carter was asked how she would describe the cohort of the school and how it had changed over the years. She gave an example to describe how students at St Aber's had different perceptions to pupils from other schools.

We went to this event the other week, it was a council thing, pupils from across the borough, great opportunity for them to see how other schools are like. And most children from the Sixth Form were there. So we were at this talk and our children were sat at the front. These 3-4 girls, they were black, started having a fight, they were pulling each other's hair, swearing. They had to be taken out. Our children were really shaken. They have never experienced anything like this at the school. I had to

talk to them afterwards and reassure them that it was fine, things like this happen. You should have seen them, they didn't know what to do with this.

Mrs Carter implied that the Ethnic Other could be more prone to unruly behaviours and the way she described the incident was as if the students at St Aber's had never experienced such behaviour before or were themselves incapable of being somewhat less well-behaved. I tried not to question what my respondents were saying and so, I did not ask Mrs Carter why she believed that the girls' skin colour was vital information in the comparison of the pupils.

In the case of the parents in St Aber's, they would not send their children to the local school because there were no adequately good state schools in the area, based on their standards. Ensuring that their children would acquire multicultural capital would jeopardise their overall education in their case. Even though they would rather more diversity at the school, they needed to choose strategically. Despite the moral dilemmas arising from the choice, ensuring the best education for their children could also be considered as the ethical and moral thing to do; therefore, it justified the choice of a private school, despite their proclamations of the need for diversity and of a welcoming environment.

Despite hopes of post-racial societies, the discussion above has illustrated that there has mainly been a change in how racism is expressed that has taken place rather than a real change in attitudes or elimination of racial inequalities altogether. As Applebaum (2005) noted most of the times white people do not have to think of themselves as racists in order for racist inequality to persist. She identified that 'the subtle but lethal types of covert racism can be maintained even when whites believe themselves to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem' (ibid.: 278). Her contention, and what the following excerpts will try to show, is that 'it is especially when white people believe themselves to be good and moral antiracist citizens that they may be contributing

to the perpetuation of systemic injustice' (ibid.). By perpetuating discourses of moral responsibility to eliminate inequalities, practical change can be rather inadequate and cross-racial understandings remain limited; as a result, the social construction of race can potentially accentuate structural inequalities. Therefore, it is this non-racist racism which can pose a problem.

As Hall (1995) argues we understand our social relations unconsciously and even though through our actions we construct ideological statements we are largely unaware of the inequalities which these might underpin; we take for granted certain statements, which are very much ideologically charged. Elsewhere, Hall and O'Shea (2013) argue that both politicians and the media portray such inequalities as common sense: this is how things are and they cannot be changed. Therefore, racialised discourses acquire a naturalised nature and inherent racism or prejudices are not necessarily responsible for the structural differences which exist. Hall (1995: 20) describes how the media perpetuate inferential racism, which allows 'racist statements to be formulated without ever bringing into awareness the racist predicates on which the statements are grounded'.

Both students and the staff expressed worries and a preoccupation around the school comprising of a 'sea of white faces', which as Yancy (2014:2) described can [provide 'frames of reference that have become normalised and naturalised ways of making sense of the social world'. I asked in all my interviews what impressions the pupils had in relation to the whiteness of the school, and neither staff nor pupils hid the fact that St Aber's and Mawerley, were very white. Olivia portrayed it in these words:

Well I do think it should be different. I don't know why it isn't different. I think the school has quite a bad problem with that. Definitely in terms of ethnicity. Because you go to [other private schools] and there is definitely not a sea of white faces. I don't think it is white supremacy or anything like that, I can

imagine if you are a kid or you are taking a kid around the school and you are not, erm, white, you are overwhelmed by all these white people, even if you don't consciously think about it but subliminally you probably think 'oh I will be a minority here'. And that, you know, if you are trying to ensure that your kids are going to be happy then you tend to overthink everything. I think that will probably come into it.

Iro: Do you think this will disadvantage you in any way though? Do you think you are not exposed to diversity enough?

Olivia: I think that even if it is not here I have definitely had exposure my whole life because I've always had friends from different schools, all around London. [she mentions some other private schools]. And I've had a job for the last year and worked in Brixton. You do get exposed to it. But I guess this is not the case for everyone.

I found it very interesting that Olivia not only noticed but also acknowledged that the school had a problem with not having enough ethnic diversity. Recognising that possibly students who did not fit into the hegemonic culture of the school would feel unwelcome was a concern manifested across the senior management team, the pupils and the parents. However, with Mawerley itself being so white and middle-class it would be difficult to recruit pupils who would bring the coveted ethnic diversity to the school. Olivia's comment that a part-time job in Brixton was the answer to her building awareness on the cultural differences could be contested as Brixton was what can be described as a gentrified area, and perhaps the cultural practices were drawn from what was largely considered as middle class and white; rather than the more ethnic practices originally found in the area.

Matthew, a much more extroverted pupil, also identified the problem but he took it for granted that white people cannot be blamed because they were trying. Him being half Iranian, where his mother moved from to the UK when she was very young, he primarily identified with his English roots, and said that he had never been to Iran or met anyone from Iran apart from his immediate family. I asked him what he thought about the cohort of the school in the past few years. He started by describing it as ‘the white situation’:

I was actually going to bring this up. I don't know if it is related to your question. I mean, we used to have a lot of ethnic people. But a lot of them left in year 11, maybe about 10 people. Now we are left with maybe 8, 6 not white people. So this is weird. A couple of years ago we played a tournament, we played a state school and they were all black and we were all white. And before the game started it was like, this is weird. You know what I mean. It's not fair. But I mean the school does a lot. One of my friends who left, but I've kept in touch with, he is half Indian half black. He could afford to come here, but it is not about that. I don't know what it is.

Going to the school every day I also felt what Matthew described. It was weird to be surrounded by white faces, especially since the school was in London, one of the most multicultural cities. As Matthew acknowledged it was not only the fact that ethnic minority people did not have the money to go to St Aber's nor live in Mawerley, but in a lot of the instances it was the fear of maybe not belonging to particular contexts.

Matthew: Maybe they feel left out. There are some people like me, who are half and half. And I still feel connected to them [white people], part of their group.

Iro: Maybe it is because you are an open person, you are very chatty. So, if you are more reserved it is different? I don't know myself.

Matthew: Maybe they feel they are not represented in the school? I don't know.

Despite Matthew saying he was 'half and half' he seemed to identify predominantly with his white background; by using the word 'they' he almost seemed to distance himself from feelings of exclusion. He suggested feeling included in the group of white people but this can be attributed to a number of factors. Perhaps, as I thought being extroverted and chatty. Perhaps because he really tried to be part of the school by taking up various activities, such as the choir, music, or being a prefect. However, it could also be suggested that his family could be placed firmly in the middle-class bracket, and also perhaps the fact that he looked nothing but white, the only not so common feature being that he had curly hair.

Most pupils referred to the fact that there were not enough ethnic minority pupils in the school as a negative thing, almost as if they felt embarrassed by it, or this was the sense that I got from their facial expressions. I asked Jeremy to talk to me about the cohort of the school and whether he would change anything:

Personally no. But from speaking to other people and from open days and such like. The school now and about 5-6 years ago, it is very white British. There is very little diversity in the school. I don't know if this is just the way Mawerley as a whole has just developed and is all representable of the climate that we live in. I genuinely don't have any complaints about the school

whatsoever. But I mean I know that some people feel that it is becoming very white and such.

Even though Jeremy did not necessarily see a problem with this, he recognised that other people could mind and probably be deterred from sending their children to St Aber's. I would not say that Jeremy's view was representative of other participants' views, and therefore, I was always surprised how someone with such different views to other pupils would be selected to be the Headboy.

Diary entry: February 2016, Open Day

I am going around with a group of parents at an Open Day. There are some BAME families, but it is the usual crowd apart from that. White, middle class, proper and trim. It is mainly mothers but there are some fathers as well; they don't seem to ask half as many questions as mothers do. One of the last stops of the tour is the Chapel. I walk in with them, the Chaplain is his usual personable self. There is a woman, with a little girl who cannot be more than 7, who carries on talking to him after everyone else moves on the next room. I approach them and sit behind them, eager to listen to what they are saying. The woman is wondering why the school is so white. Everyone seems to be white, she says. I came all the way from north London to this school because I have heard good things about its reputation as a welcoming school. How can it be welcoming when everyone is the same? I would be willing to do the trek from north London but this, not sure how to describe it. The Chaplain seemingly feels some unease and initially, he tries to justify it by mentioning the ever-present excuse: the area is all white. 'We live in a very white area', exclaim the mother. 'Yes, it is bad' responds the Chaplain. It is difficult for him to pretend that the

school does not have a problem with this; especially, when parents seem to notice and mention it as an issue.

Although this was not a representative discussion, the whiteness of the area and the school was a recurring issue, as something which needed to be tackled. I was uncertain of the motivations of the people who wanted a more diverse cohort, but it could be suggested that being part of an environment which represented real life and London, was one of the main drivers.

Becoming integrated

Despite the attempts of the school to attract more people from ethnic minorities, they were very much the minority. From the different classes I was observing it was only two pupils that were not white. A girl, Smita, whose parents were originally from India and a boy, Tariq, whose family were originally from Pakistan; both pupils grew up in London and they had very different outlooks on how they viewed their ethnic difference.

Tariq, who I introduced above, was a practising Muslim and very much engaged in that community. When I finally managed to talk to him, he explained that he had had some family issues, with his sister being involved in an accident, and that had affected his attendance and his academic performance. Despite the problems with school attendance all this time he had been very much involved in his other endeavours, which largely included him representing the youth community of his Mosque. He had appeared on TV doing interviews and writing for various media outlets with regards to Islam and how young people could represent the religion and show that it is a religion of peace, often misrepresented in the media. The school had given him the space to hold debates on the topic. As he described it these were not attempts to convert people but show people what Islam is. He expressed his worry that they had been receiving some leaflets through the letterbox that Muslims are dangerous and with the various terrorist attacks [mainly in Paris as this was the main news story at the time] he felt his

community was under threat. Throughout the interview, he was trying to show how invested he was in his religion and protecting his community as much as possible, mainly from bad press and how other people viewed them. He had applied to study Law and he mentioned that one of the reasons he wanted to read Law was so the he could protect Muslim people and represent them in legal cases, as he believed there was not enough support under the current circumstances.

In the same way that the majority of the white pupils from St Aber's did not socialise much with people from other ethnic backgrounds, the same applied for Tariq. He really liked the people from St Aber's but his friends came from his family circle:

People I am generally acquainted with, family friends, my cousin [...], people I've met at the mosque and I know quite well. I have some friends at the school but I have quite a lot of friends from my social circle. I know a lot of people from the Mosque. We also have a very close-knit family.

Most of the discussion on what Tariq did outside school hours revolved around activities which were related to the Mosque or family gatherings. He rarely mentioned seeing pupils from St Aber's, or being involved in co-curricular activities. This did not imply that he had anything against them or that he would not like to do more things with them: '*it is just they think differently*', he said. Therefore, it could be seen that socialising with people from your own cultural background applied to most participants, with a visible segregation, which happened rather naturally at the school. It could be argued that this was not beneficial for none of the participants as it perpetuated divisions and lack of understanding amongst the different cultures.

Smita, started by describing herself as someone who came from a family

of very political parents. She described them as '*champagne socialists*', a fact which she believed made her '*more aware to the different injustices and issues at the school*'. She painted a rather positive image of the school in terms of acceptance. Her parents chose to send her to St Aber's because state schools in the area had a cliquy environment:

it would be all the girls who are Afro Caribbean together and all the white middle class girls who live in Mawereley together and sometimes you just don't fit in, and you end up in the middle. They didn't want that, but here I have more freedom because I don't have to make a choice.

However, Smita had a much more nuanced understanding of skin colour compared to her classmates and how that affected her everydayness at the school. Both her parents were of Indian origin, but she was born and raised in London. Her parents had never been to India themselves, as they were born in Kenya, so the connections they had with India as a family were very loose.

I've always had this weird thing with ethnicity because my mother is Indian and my father is Indian, but my mum is very pale and everyone thinks she is English basically, she is very pale. It is like she has the same colour skin as you, so everyone thinks I am half English, but I am not, I am fully Indian. [...] So it is really weird when other people are like you are Indian, you are Indian, and I am like yeah I am but I don't see why you make such a big fuss about it, because I don't feel the connection that other people want to make of it.

I asked her to describe in more detail her experiences about the school with regards to her skin colour.

Obviously because I am one of the few ethnic minority students in my year, there are 2 other girls, and people make a lot of

stereotypes and assumptions about me. Obviously, they don't come into contact with other people, so they make these massive generalisations. It was the same at my primary school, it was a primarily white school, again people used to make massive generalisations. Like, I was wearing a maxi dress and it had a split and I cannot remember if it was a joke, I think they were trying to make a joke. They were 'oh is this your burqa that you cut up? Or are you vegetarian? Are you Muslim, what ethnicity I am, where my parents are from, if I speak other languages. I was asked at Year 7 if I was going to have an arranged marriage.

Smita identified that the pupils at St Aber's did not mix with people with other ethnic backgrounds, so they resorted to stereotypes. Smita mentioned how at times she felt annoyed by some of the comments but these were her friends, and this was probably just banter, so she did not want to make them look bad. She continued that as people got to know her better they realised that most of the stereotypes were only stereotypes and her skin colour did not define who she was, *'they do not see my skin colour so much now'*. I thought it was remarkable how skin colour became such a marker of one's identity. Even though Smita said that her parents chose this school so she would not have to be in the middle, she somehow occupied a middle position until people got to know her more and understood that skin colour was not how she should be defined. I assumed that perhaps such limited contact with the ethnic Other made pupils from St Aber's genuinely curious; however, it was also anomalous that they did not have this contact in a city like London. However, as she had mentioned finding difficult to cope at times, I asked her if she talked to the school about it, a school which prided itself in its welcoming nature.

No, because it was something they could not really do anything about, half because they couldn't be bothered and half because it is something which is difficult for them to do something. Like they cannot make an announcement and be like 'no, she is not a vegetarian, or she is not a Muslim or something like that'. And the students, I'd rather they asked me rather than go to university with these assumptions and spread the problem.

The school on their part believed they did their best to ensure that pupils were tolerant and welcoming to difference. Smita painted a rather different picture with regards to how the situation was dealt with. It seemed that herself undertook the task of educating her fellow students. Both staff and pupils believed, as mentioned in the various interviews, that university would resolve the issue of ethnic mixing but Smita alluded to the fact that by that point maybe they would not have built the capability to ask questions in a sensitive way. Perhaps they would have come to form ideas based on stereotypes. Moreover, most of the pupils from the school would go to Russell Group universities, where BAME students are still underrepresented (Russell Group 2016), which might end up perpetuating their image of what elite educational institutions mostly look like and who belongs to them.

One of my main questions to the teachers was how the school was promoting the diversity and tolerance that they were so proud of, if the pupils rarely experienced diversity. As the quote below shows most teachers refused responsibility; it would be university or the parents that would teach them how to integrate, or the fact that they lived in London was adequate to fulfil this need, as by default it showed them diversity. The head of Upper Sixth, Mr Brown commented on this question:

Iro: Do you think there is integration and acceptance of others, do you think they have that or do they live in this middle-class, white bubble?

Mr Brown: I think you could argue that but at the same time St Aber's is a very tolerant place, a very friendly welcoming place. There is a bubble element, [...]. We are not a huge ethnic mix here, but at the same time they live in London. You know, I mean, you walk outside the school gates, perhaps not round here Mawerley but elsewhere going in south London, these are really diverse communities. I think you got to be pretty hidden to live in London and not experience integration and that mix. I hope that, I think they are yeah. I think most of them have a broad view of the world. It depends, of course, where they go on to university as much as anything. A lot of the universities are full of the same kind of person, there is a handful who is not that. As much as anything is the next part of their journey.

Therefore, the responsibility of the school was reallocated to the next part of the pupils' journey: university. I also thought it was interesting that members of staff believed that pupils would go to other areas and mix with those from other cultures; I was unsure how they envisaged this to happen. After I finished my year at the school, I was still unsure whether the pupils would, in practice, engage with those different from them. London is a multicultural city, but it can be relatively easy to shield yourself from the Other, and I was still thinking that this was very much the case with a lot of St Aber's pupils.

Whiteness as an exclusionary force

The school had once been part of the Assisted Places scheme, which was introduced by the Conservatives in the 1980s and later in the 1990s was

abolished by Labour. The scheme provided free places at the school to mostly children from the surrounding areas. As Mr Jones described it the pupils were mainly from ethnic minority backgrounds. There were some pupils from middle class backgrounds, but usually they were not in need of the scheme in such grand scale. With the abolition of the scheme, the ethnic Other was phased out from the school. The area itself transformed greatly in the last ten years, whereby local corner shops made way for chains or organic wine grocery shops. All the teachers who were at the school while the scheme was in place described the school as being rough. The Director of studies, Mr Evans, explained that the main reason the school had improved so much was because the behaviour of the pupils had improved greatly compared to ten-fifteen years ago.

I was surprised when I arrived here about the level of expectations from the staff on the pupils. I think the expectations of the kids was lower than it should have been. Part of that reason was that, I think, the standard behaviour was nowhere near as it is now. So, I think a number of staff were spending more time trying to bring discipline and less time teaching.

It was not explicitly mentioned why the behaviour had changed, but through the interview it appeared that the fact that middle-class pupils were now the majority at the school was the catalyst for the change. Mrs Carter, who had been at the school for more than sixteen years was asked to describe her experience of how the school had changed and the reasons for that change.

I think a lot of this has to do with the area. It has to do with government subsidies [and how they are no longer in place]. I think it is a combination of a lot of things as well. Of what we offer as a school as well, I would imagine.

Iro: So why do you think it is not more of a mix here? Do you think people from ethnic minority backgrounds cannot afford it because the scheme is gone?

Mrs Carter: And also the fact that it is a vicious circle here. Different ethnic groups will come and visit the school and if all they see is white faces, they will not want to bring their children here. This is what a few parents have said in the past when I spoke to them.

Iro: So they don't really like how the school is structured, the fact that it is only white faces?

Mrs Carter: Yeah, possibly. They feel they don't belong here.

Iro: Or that their children would be excluded.

Mrs Carter: Yeah yeah.

Mrs Carter was sceptical of the situation. Her children attended the school and she would like them to have friends from different backgrounds, as she said. It was true that because of her profession she hardly socialised with people from different backgrounds herself. The same applied for her husband. Both the Head Master and the Second Master have mentioned in more than one occasion that they would be '*ecstatic*' to have more pupils from ethnic minorities at the school, as this would encourage the diversity they were trying to sustain at the school. However, they never acknowledged the issue in the same way as Mrs Carter. The changes in Mawerley played a key role in the cohort of the school, despite not mentioning race. However, as Father Clarke mentioned ethnic minority, in essence, felt as the '*odd one out*', or the '*token ethnic minority child*', which defined St Aber's as an exclusive and exclusionary place.

Trying to identify the reasons why the school had primarily white pupils, I discussed the religious foundation of the school with Father Clarke.

We don't hide the fact that we have a Christian foundation. My idea is that people should always leave the chapel being able to take something away with them and because I got them there, I think it is pastorally abusive to say you must believe this or you must believe that. So the chapel can work on a number of levels [...] It just seems to me everyone, no matter what their religious background should know some classic hymns. Obviously, they are going to come across them culturally later in life. It is just part of, English literature is based on the authorised version of the Bible and Shakespeare and the book of common prayers. So, these are the 3 foundations of English literature, they are specifically Christian, so I don't have any qualms about that.

Father Clarke believed that the Chapel could play a humanistic rather than a religious role in the lives of the pupils, which is what I experienced as well while attending some of the services. There were sermons on Facebook, being kind, practising mindfulness, among other topics. I was a little wary, however, of how these issues would resonate with Muslim pupils who might have very different views on some of the topics. Tariq mentioned that he no longer went to the service because he became lazy, not because he felt offended by what was said. Father Clarke gave his own response to this issue:

I mean we take it for granted but actually this year nobody has exempted themselves from Chapel. Last year there was one person on medical grounds. I mean Muslims have wanted exemption in the past, it might be that they all come because it is so anodyne they can just let it wash over them. It is easy to

take it for granted when we say you have got to come to chapel.
But they are quite pliable.

As the Chaplain explained there was very small number of Muslims at the school, pointing to the change over the years, which meant that provision for their religious practices was limited these days.

Iro: So can the Muslim pupils practise here?

Father Clarke: We had a little room for Muslim prayer. Last year it faded away. As with all these things you need someone that will be responsible for running it. Funnily enough, someone came to see it yesterday to help us start again.

Iro: It seems to me that the Muslims you have here are quite moderate or not the very strict kind. If they don't mind about praying that much.

Father Clarke: Well they have to be [...] if they were sort of nutcase Muslims then they would not be likely to send their child here.

Iro: True, they wouldn't fit in very well, wouldn't quite feel comfortable, this is a liberal school in a lot of respects, from what I gather.

Father Clarke: Presumably they would try to find a school which would be more... I mean Muslim families tend to loiter around different schools, as a general rule, but those are moderate Muslims. But more you know loopy loos they're not going to want their children to be in a building with depictions of God, for example.

Father Clarke's description of who might want to send their children to St Aber's and how '*loopy loos*' would not choose St Aber's made me wonder whether the school was actually as open and tolerant as they proclaimed to be. Looking at the workings of St Aber's, it felt as if the provisions they had were in place for those white, middle-class pupils who would choose the school. With changes in Mawerley, the school also changed and aspects which were in place for ethnic minority pupils faded away, with little hope of being reinvigorated. Therefore, I assumed that parents who visited the school would soon realise that there was little provision for difference.

I asked Mrs Carter what she thought about the cohort of the school and whether St Aber's was trying to welcome those from different cultural and religious backgrounds or how tolerance was instilled in the current cohort.

I don't know. This is a very good point actually. I am very aware of that when we have speakers who come and talk to pupils. For example, we had this person who came to talk to year 11, one of the topics we had was on integration. And I had a lady who came to talk to them, she is Japanese and works for the local YMCA, teaches yoga. And she always refers to different stories, how she would go and visit people in the local council, and give people free yoga classes. And she suggests how they can do the same things. Now whether children then go and do that or not is a very difficult thing to say. I suspect they don't do enough. I think not enough. Like I know there are some programmes in the local community for the sixth form, [...] where children from here go and talk to or help pupils from other schools. Read, for example. And I know that this one school we are dealing with, I would say about 90% of the pupils are black. So, there is some kind of link there, and also having

talked to the Chaplains, we also do some work with [a primary school in the area], which again has a majority of black pupils. But again, trying to integrate pupils like this...it is very forced. I don't think this helps particularly. They all seem to have parties where they invite each other and pupils from other schools, from their kind, so it is very much...it is difficult.

Referring to the pupils socialising with their own 'kind' echoes what I have been arguing in a many of the chapters. Integration of those not similar to what are perceived as normative behaviours, tends to be in the public sphere with little meaningful contact. Mrs Evans' comments on the fact that they helped students who were black points to the notion that there are exclusionary forces within education and there are those who are privileged and have a better education, to such an extent that they could help others.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how race and racism is lived in a white context. Participants talked about their experiences of colour-blindness, or rather realising their whiteness but not attributing any special significance to it. The chapter looked at how notions of race and racism are understood vis-à-vis discussions of the Empire and how processes of colonisation and decolonisation have shaped discourses of integration and openness in Britain. It has been argued that whiteness can act as an exclusionary force even when those who possess it are seemingly unaware of what actions might construct whiteness as a privileged racial identity. I tried to include examples which reflect those divisions and what practices might enforce those distinctions. The following chapter will discuss another area which I identified as one which creates further partitions among social groups: the idea of class and its contribution to the construction of inclusive/exclusive boundaries.

Chapter Seven

Classed Encounters

The previous chapter discussed race as a factor which creates a bubble for St Aber's and Mawerley. However, I would argue that class might act as a more distinctive factor in how people view those different to them. Despite the (mis)understandings of what social class is, which were discussed in Chapter two, it is argued that class as a marker for inclusion and exclusion still has a prominent position within society. As Savage et al. (2001) note people are usually hesitant in placing themselves within a particular class. They wish to be seen outside of class, even though they might be aware of how class affects their life histories. A major division appears between 'those with the cultural capital

to play reflexively with ideas of class, and those who lack these resources and feel threatened by the implications of relating class to their own personal identities' (ibid.: 875). Through this process, people just want to be seen as ordinary rather than affiliate themselves with actions associated with a particular class, something which seemed to be the case with my participants; who perhaps did not want to appear as having certain advantages because of their social background. However, this chapter will look at how the financialisation of many social aspects of life, with the neoliberal framework dominating the labour market and education (see Amin, 2013; Hall & O'Shea, 2013; Brown, 2015; Nixon, 2009; Allon & Redden, 2012), class solidarities can manifest themselves through cultural practices, lifestyle choices and which of these are valued and allow access in social spaces. Or contrastingly, which ones can make people feel excluded from spaces which acquire a privileged significance. The chapter will examine how social practices become classed and they create divisions with the classed Other. The white, middle-class bubble the participants often found themselves in was difficult to break both because they did not socialise with those from a different class and because their normative practices were exclusive and excluding the Other. This created a discomfort amongst the participants and the desire to sometimes distance themselves from their classed identity.

Forming the moral self

Certain behaviours which are usually enacted by white and middle-class actors, tend to be perceived and accepted as the norm. Lawler (2008) draws on Bourdieu and his notion of habitus and points out how the training that middle class people get (through parenting, schooling, or images which they are exposed to) becomes normative and is seen as part of nature, rather than something which is acquired, often through financial means. Therefore, those who grow up in more affluent and middle-class families might learn to be positively disposed towards specific actions and negatively against others, while devaluing conducts which are not part of their social milieu.

Hannah, a mother at an Open Day, described how the local secondary school, a few miles away from St Aber's, had deterred her from sending her child there.

It is an OK school, I mean there are quite a few people from ethnic backgrounds, and a few estates, I mean it wouldn't be my first choice. But I thought I would go and have a look, you know. And I was having a look and the Headmaster came to me and he said 'I'm sorry Mrs Jones, but I don't think you and your child would fit in here. So, I asked 'why not?' and he said it is because the cohort is very different to us. I mean, it would be nice to let us make that choice, you know.

In this instance, it was middle-class families who felt that classed boundaries were erected to exclude Them from Others. Arguably, the integration of different groups is not always as successful as it can be, especially at schools, where enclaves can be produced and groups are formed based on similarities. This can extend to both who is allowed in but also who feels like they should remain out.

Public debates on the ideas of privilege and what constitutes unfair advantage can easily be rendered subordinate in public discussions. It can be argued that since the public sphere has been substituted largely by an inward-looking private one, such concerns are limited to discussions within the family and advantage becomes an undistinguishable feature, as it is not compared vis-à-vis the wider population. As Habermas (1991) argues there has been a destruction of the relationship between public and private spheres in modern urban spaces. This is rendered possible not only through architectural development but also by how the function of the streets is arranged. There is now more than ever a spatially protected private sphere, which does not create the free space for public contacts and communications that bring private people together and discuss. As Habermas continues the private sphere, largely

constituted by the nuclear family, has allowed people to withdraw from public discussions and provided the illusion of a perfectly private personal sphere; whereby, the ills of society are not affecting the homeliness provided in the large Victorian houses, as was for example the case of Mawerley.

It is not suggested that the families who choose to attend privileged schools have a 'moral deficit' (Ball & Vincent, 2007) or that they do not see beyond their own when they interact with other parents, or when making decisions. However, the liberal ideologies are not always enough to deter them from taking advantage of their economic privilege. Or at some level they might be unaware of what advantages they experience because of their socioeconomic background, even when their lives are vastly different from those living in nearby estates. Often, their economic circumstances blind them from their own privilege and cannot imagine problems which cannot be solved with money. Especially, as the divisions of private and public are quite stark, it is difficult to see what structural disadvantages might exist for others. Ball & Vincent (2007) and Butler and Robson (2003) looked at areas which share the same characteristics as Mawerley. Ball & Vincent (2007) studied an area in south west London which resembles the area of my study in many ways, in terms of the people who live there, the houses, the shops, areas which can be described as representing new money, while the residents can be depicted as the new middle-classes. In Ball and Vincent's study the parents mentioned that homogeneity was something that would benefit the family and the values they were trying to promote. They appreciated like-minded people and 'people like us'. In their study, very few people thought that this homogeneity was irksome. By comparison the residents in Stoke Newington, mentioned that commitment to social and ethnic diversity might have been fragile or even superficial. However, this can be contrasted to Mawerley where such commitment is virtually non-existent. The above studies seem to suggest that the construction of the middle classes and their claims of belonging are managed through 'asymmetric processes by which the middle classes create and maintain spatial boundaries

between themselves and racialised/classed others' (Jackson & Benson, 2014). Therefore, one of the main characteristics of the middle-class identity was the fact that diversity was embraced on a superficial level and resulted in no real interaction, what Butler and Robson (2001) described as social tectonics. Comparing the concept to a more recent form of gentrification Jackson and Butler (2014) found that white middle classes moving to Peckham, were more involved to what was happening in the area and felt more of a social obligation as they felt they could not hold the social area to arm's length, as was the case to Brixton 10 years ago, when Butler and Robson talked about 'social tectonics'. However, Mawerley echoed the case of super-gentrification, which Lees (2003) describes was prevalent in global cities, such as London. These places see intense investment and are powered 'by fortunes from the global finance and corporate service industries' (ibid.: 2487).

It is through these processes that the middle classes displace others and colonise areas, where people like them tend to congregate. Although they see the immorality of this in relation to their liberal values, they define their belonging in ways which will ensure them a pleasant, leafy suburban feel to their everydayness. The middle-class participants in Jackson and Benson's study, living in the margins of Peckham and East Dulwich, the two areas being on the opposite ends of the spectrum of ethnic mixing - Dulwich with mainly white and middle class, while Peckham with largely ethnic minority and Afro Caribbean residents - described the ability to be happy in a multicultural environment as essential to living in the area, it was almost a prerequisite. They prided themselves in having eaten curried goat and having people from various ethnic backgrounds in close proximity. However, the enclaves they occupied and the people they mixed with were primarily white and middle-class like themselves.

As has been shown in the interviews above, the participants in my study mentioned repeatedly how they embraced diversity but they still created a bubble for themselves, which consisted of white, middle-class people. The classed

Other remained ambivalent as a concept, never openly criticised but also not part of what would be included in their social circles. The boundaries were never explicitly drawn, but there was always a latent distinction.

What led to the creation of a total locale in Mawerley was the suburban leafy feel to the area which alludes to an idyllic countryside context. Ideal values and the right/normative/white way of being was firmly located within the family; with families being ‘very sure of themselves and their values; they are confident and convey a sense of entitlement and yet also seem more wary of the risks and insecurities of social life in London’ (Butler & Robson 2001: 1180). Therefore, self-containment was embraced, with very similar people gathering together. This insularity and self-sufficiency can lead to ideological justifications, with private schooling acting as a way of good parenting. For new middle-class parents, private schools represent social enclaves which do not only transmit education but also social values. As a result, they are attracted to schools which do not only promote the curriculum, but they represent and embody traditional forms of education, as seen through transmitting social values and morals, encouraging sports and church attendance (ibid.).

Demarcating class boundaries

The idea that financial background determines one’s social position marks the distinction between who is considered to have value in society, since individualistic ideologies enable classifying others based on their career and financial gains. Distinctions can be made based on people’s ability to have a career and the financial means to participate in activities which hold normative value. Since the pupils at the school mostly participated in such activities, questions of class centred around financial gains.

Jonny was very passionate about drama and although he had the grades that would get him into Oxbridge he had decided against applying. When meeting Jonny, you saw a boy who could really present himself, he was overtly

polite, and he spoke in a manner that filled me with self-doubt about my way of talking, as I am not 'posh' enough and have an accent. I asked him about his idea of class and where he placed himself.

I would say firmly somewhere in the middle class. But it is odd because I get the impression that my dad earns a lot more than my mum [...]. But it is funny because I live with my mum who earns a lot less money than my dad, but by virtue of my dad I am firmly into the middle class. I don't know where into the middle class because it is a very big spectrum, probably I'm closer towards the upper middle class.

Iro: Why do you say that?

I mean also a lot of it is from where I live. And a lot of that is dictated based on money. So in that sense even where you live or come from is a part of how much income you make, so it is affected by that. Obviously, it is the fact that I go to a private school. When I was growing up I had a nanny, which is an upper middle class thing to have. It is also the fact I had a very privileged childhood, I grew up in Richmond which was on top of the hill and everything was really quiet. Quite upper middle class. So, a part of it is my background. But it is mainly my dad. If my dad didn't earn, if my mum wasn't supplemented by my dad, it would depend I guess.

For Jonny, the biggest element in placing oneself into the middle class, edging on the top of the spectrum, was the fact that his dad earned a lot of money. This fact presented him with a lot of financial benefits: private schooling, a nanny, a house in a coveted location. Although as he said he takes the train to school, he had never really lived in an area with much diversity and he would not say that any of the people he socialised with came from a different background.

However, he had a distinctive theory on how people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds might experience life, one which contradicted the usual rhetoric of people on benefits being lazy and not driven. The quote below was his response when I asked him if he believed that the fact that his family was well-off affected his life in ways which were beyond just living in a nice house and getting a good education.

I think so, because I have sort of, everything given to me. Well not everything, but you know what I mean, I receive things. In that sense, I think my character hasn't been so ambitious in the way I have been trying to get things. Because I have already had things. In that sense, maybe there is an argument to make that people from middle class backgrounds, I guess, there is not so much drive to succeed, unless it is instilled by the parents. Intrinsically, as part of being what you could call working class, there is an aspect of wanting to improve your situation, whereas I don't have this need to improve my situation so obviously, I am not as ambitious. So, I think it is partly driven by your character and even if you receive less opportunities that can help, I am not going to say help because this is not what I mean, but it can drive you to be better I think, if you come from a less well-off background.

Iro: So you try harder?

Jonny: Yes, I think so. Obviously, I don't have any first-hand experience with that, so I cannot overgeneralise. But this is my sense.

Iro: So how does this link with, erm, because what you are saying comes in direct contrast with people who say that those

from the working classes fall into the benefit system instead of trying to get out of poverty. What is your opinion on that?

Jonny: I think the media is to blame. They focus on the bad aspects. Obviously, there are people who are benefit, I wouldn't call them thieves, but they take advantage of the benefit system, which is bad obviously. That they claim fraudulently or they are lazy, I don't know, I would like to think that they are trying to earn a decent living. Just because they've had a bad start in life, or come from a less well-off background or their education isn't as good, I'd like to think that the vast majority of those who claim benefits aren't in this situation. Again, I haven't had any experience, I mean the few people that I know who did claim benefits go to this school, which implies that they are trying very hard because they came to the school and only trying to get financial help in the form of a scholarship, which means that naturally, they are at the top end of the people who claim benefits. I don't really subscribe to the belief that most people on benefits are just lazy people who don't work because they don't want to work because I don't think people think like that. I think people want things to do. And I don't think benefits are substantial enough for you to say 'right I am done with earning anything more in my life'. Because there is always the drive to do better for yourself.

Jonny's ideas about being high achieving despite the odds and probably being more driven because you do not have everything given to you can be taken as romanticising ideas of success; somehow making it despite the circumstances. His belief, however, that perhaps middle-class pupils in private schools did not have the same drive as their less well-off peers because everything was given to them, was not something that would be easily admitted by pupils and schools

alike, I thought. Believing that claiming benefits is akin to receiving a scholarship to attend a private school was somewhat mistaken, as it did not represent what benefit seeking might entail for those who struggle to make ends meet. However, it can be argued that this was an example of what he repeatedly mentioned: he did not have much real-life knowledge or examples from his social circle for the claims he was making.

Jeremy, on the other hand, initially drew the distinctions of class based on schooling: people who go to boarding schools are upper-middle, people who go to very good state schools or day private schools are middle-class, and people who go to comprehensive or low achieving schools are working-class. The trichotomy was a rather overgeneralised statement, so I prompted him to elaborate more on his ideas and tell me where he belonged. He placed himself firmly in the middle or maybe upper-middle, since his parents went to boarding schools, and he explained his reasoning behind this.

We've got a second house, do sailing, have a boat, play golf. I guess it is the social activities that you do. For example, my granddad has provided me with a lot of opportunities. For example, he bought two holiday houses and then we have managed to buy the second one off my cousins. And then they were drawn into sailing, or golf, which are typically middle-class leisure sports. Rugby is a big part of my life and this is something I associate with as being middle class. I guess the area in which I live, or upper middle class. I don't actually know what makes you middle class. I don't know if it is the earning of your parents or the way you present yourself or the activities that you do. It is probably a combination of things.

Jeremy's description of social activities being markers which distinguish social groups was rather accurate, as certain practices are considered to define someone

as middle-class: golf, having a boat, or a holiday home. In their majority, even though pupils might have been initially hesitant to identify with a particular class they seemed to have an awareness of what constitutes middle-classness. However, all of them expressed hesitation in describing it in firm terms. Remarkably, most pupils were aware that their school was very much a white middle-class school, and the stigma that this might bring to the school. The stigma here acquired a distinct meaning from when the school was described as 'rough'. Whereas in the past the academic results were not as successful, it was implied that those attending the school now believed there was a stigma associated with being exclusive, or too middle-class, vis-à-vis being multicultural and open to difference. Discussing with Jeremy his experience of the school he recognised that the school was becoming very white and middle class. He did not express this as his opinion but what some people at the school think. In this light, I asked him if he believed that this was a problem at all.

No. I only think it should be a problem because then it begs the question 'why do you need ethnicity or class if people should be treated equally or are equal anyway?'. I don't really have a problem with it. I can see in the public eye being a problem because then it might get the reputation of appealing only to white middle-class families rather than the general population or the populous as a whole. But what they don't realise is the fact that we are heavily involved in community projects. We don't just associate ourselves with your traditional middle-class family. We are heavily involved with Elsievery¹² primary school, which is the majority or 90% of that, English is not their first language, or the parents are rather illiterate. It is in Mawerley, down the road.

¹² name changed

Iro: Which years are involved in that? It is not sixth form. Because I have asked pupils from the sixth form and they do not seem aware of this set up.

Jeremy: Once you get to sixth form you have games day every Wednesday or you can go down to the local primary school and help out there.

Iro: Do sixth formers know that?

Jeremy: Yes. They are given the opportunity but I don't know how many people partake in it. I disassociate myself from it. I only do sport on games day.

Jeremy, being the Head Boy was aware of the arrangements the school had in place to make sure they were involved in community projects and helping those less well-off but from what I understood and from what he suggested it was not something that a lot of students do in practice. The fact that he was the Head Boy and at the same time saying that he distanced himself from this practice was probably not the best role model example. Most pupils, like Jeremy, were very much involved in sports so Wednesday would be a day devoted to that. Therefore, his suggestion that the school should not be considered as a hub for white middle-class privilege was almost contradictory. The fact that he also described the parents from the other school as illiterate almost felt as it was conflated with the fact that they did not have English as their first language.

The discussion with Jeremy felt disconcerting. It alluded to the notion that charitable programmes can often acquire a moralistic purpose, which is not always as beneficial as it is imagined to be. As Kenway and Fahey describe it:

Such programmes are variously justified in educational and social terms. They may be seen as simply teaching students about 'giving' to others, about how to volunteer and make a difference where it matters, as helping students to

learn how to take responsibility, as providing them with leadership experience, as making available to them occasions to mix with others unlike themselves, as providing them with opportunities to 'give back' and as 'changing the world' for the better. Overall, personal development, character, leadership and citizenship are central tropes (2014: 98).

St Aber's, under the initiative of Father Clarke was involved in several such projects, but it was not something which was widely advertised and therefore, students were not always involved.

Pathologising working class women

Through hegemonic discourses, there are certain identifications which can be devalued across society. By othering groups of people, it is often that they acquire less value as they stand vis-à-vis what is normal (Pease 2010). Those who are othered are often unequally positioned in relation to those who do the othering, or those who occupy positions of power and privilege (Pickering 2001). To exemplify that, working-class women in McKenzie's study (2015) living on an estate in Nottingham were being demonised and felt judged by people who did not live on the estate. McKenzie, for example, highlighted how the working-class women of the estate were represented as morally and sexually suspect by people with little knowledge of the estate. Conversely, being inside the estate was the only place they could feel safe and be free from accusations that their lifestyles were characterised by benefit seeking, crime, and sexual promiscuity. Similarly, the women who were studied by Skeggs (2005), through their organising of and going to hen parties in Manchester, represented all the ills of the working-class body, through moral obsessions and being beyond governance. They were seen by other residents in Manchester as immoral repellent women and their hen parties were associated with contagion, pollution, danger, distaste and excess heterosexuality (ibid.: 966). They were positioned as

being vulgar, loud, and being a tasteless presence, which went against the normative gay scene of the city. These women represented everything that was wrong with society: benefit-claiming, working-class poor, dependent on the welfare state and not trying to make it for themselves; as the neoliberal paradigm demands of people. These images resonate with TV programmes that pathologised working class people, and especially mothers, who were not able to look after their children properly and fed them unhealthy foods. In these shows, such as *Health of Nations* (BBC2) or *You Are What You Eat* (channel 4), working class families are portrayed as fat and with unhealthy habits (in contrast to the image of the middle class, fit and healthy families as described below). Negative depictions of working classness in tabloids and newspapers are similarly often highly gendered, with single mothers pictured as one of the most unworthy social group. The Daily Mail has featured numerous headlines depicting a negative image of the white working classes (for example, fig. 1).



fig. 1 (Duel 2012)

Single mothers will be forced to seek work for their benefits

Labour MPs criticise Welfare Reform Bill, which will require parents on benefits to look for jobs when their youngest child turns three



fig. 2

By using sensationalist language, such as ‘single-mothers will be forced to seek work’ for their benefits (Ross, 2015) (see fig.2) the working-class female is demonised as either promiscuous, lazy, or incompetent to be a good mother to her children. Implying that relying on benefits and not actively seeking a job can potentially illustrate that they do not promote a good work ethic. Being ‘forced to work’ implies that this is not something willingly sought after, which is an assumption rather than a fact.

Contrastingly, in Mawerley a lot of middle-class mothers do not work, something which can be observed while walking around in the streets during daytime on weekdays, so it can be assumed that their husbands often provide for the household. This does not always attract the same negative criticism of someone who is idle or prefers not to work. Oftentimes, this can potentially show a dedication to raising one’s child, which is not often attributed to a working-class mother who chose to have a child young without providing a nuclear family model. Contrastingly, Mawerley was given the nickname ‘Commons and Baggies’ over the last decade to show that it was common for mothers to be seen amongst the commons taking their children for a stroll.

Although differences in culture and taste are not always openly discussed as class markers, this is, indeed, how they operate – as exemplified in the following incident extracted from my diary entry. As it was half term there were a lot of mothers and children out in the area on a Monday afternoon. The middle-class fathers of ‘Commons and Baggies’ tended to spend time with their children at the weekend; their demanding jobs not always allowing time during the weekdays, something which was testified by the mothers I met and my own observations around Mawerley. Although mothers were a common sight on weekdays, there was a great number of fathers at the common or walking down Mawerley Lane with their children. The situation during the week was different, however.

Diary Entry: February 2016, Mawerley

As I was carrying my shopping I decided to take the bus. The woman getting on the bus in front of me was an archetypal middle-class woman of Mawerley. Her two little girls were also what children of middle-class families in the area looked like: with cute dresses, white and blonde. Initially, I did not understand what was happening but then I realised that the woman had some kind of problem with her Oyster card. The woman became more and more flustered and she was on the verge of crying. I was standing behind her, unable to move forward and find a seat on the bus. As both the driver and the people on the bus were losing their patience, as I could see people fidgeting in their seats, the woman started shouting at the bus driver ‘You are not listening to me, I am telling you what happened and you are just not listening. I never take the bus, I drive everywhere, I don't know how it all works, but I know I am right, you are not listening’. The bus driver remained very calm, from what I could hear there was a mix up with the cards. A woman sitting at the back of the bus, had had enough

by that point and shouted: ‘Oi take your children and go upstairs, don’t talk to him like this, we have things to do, stop talking.’ She was also with a toddler and a baby, both mixed race, the toddler eating crisps, while the baby was in a buggy. Her buggy seemed a lot cheaper than the ones I have seen in the area so often – retailing at around £800. Her clothes and hair were very much different, a very big hair bun, fake eyelashes and long fake nails, and gymwear but not the expensive brands that are sold on Mawerley Lane, distinctive from their inconspicuous branding. The bus driver agreed to let her go, as this argument was going nowhere. The woman took a few steps and turned to the woman who had shouted. ‘It is because of people like you that I never take the bus. I cannot stand you.’ She quickly went upstairs, while the woman who was sitting only mouthed ‘posh bitch’.

Although it was never mentioned what was implied by ‘*people like you*’ I felt that this was a criticism towards the non-normative behaviour of a working-class woman. Superficially, the middle-class woman’s comment might be perceived to be a retaliation for being hollered at from the back of the bus. But there is of course another reinterpretation: it seemingly encompassed poor people, from a lower socioeconomic background, people who probably relied on benefits, and fed crisps to their children. Mawerley and Mawerley Lane, by contrast, were breaming with places that make juices for breakfast and healthy brunches; walking around during the day I would often see young mothers at these brunch spots. The moral judgements of taste and what counts as appropriate was rarely explicitly mentioned, nor criticised. However, it was the underlying judgment of which places value certain behaviours and acts of consumption.

Class disgust

Tyler describes how ‘class disgust’ (2008) has acquired a latent character. The word ‘chav’ has acquired a highly contested figurative form, publicly imagined in ‘excessive, distorted, and caricatured ways’ (ibid: 18). As Tyler argues:

the emergence of these figures is always expressive of an underlying social crisis or anxiety: these figures are mobilised in ways that attribute superior forms of social capital to the subject positions and social groups they are implicitly or explicitly differentiated from. In terms of classed identities, we can understand the emergence of the chav figure as an intrinsic part of a larger process of “class making” which attempts to distinguish the white upper and middle classes from the white poor (ibid. :18).

The word ‘chav’ has come to replace the term ‘underclass’, perhaps in attempts to demarcate class differentiations through a consumer culture. Excesses in branding and jewellery are one of the elements that they value; something middle-class people do not value equally so they deem it as wrong. Depictions of ‘chavs’ have been analysed in great detail by Jones (2012), who starts his book by recounting an incident where his middle-class friends were making a joke of ‘chavs’ not being able to shop at Woolies anymore. Woolies, although it does not exist anymore, was seen as the shop that the ‘underclass’ would do their shopping. Their tastes could be satisfied there; something which could not be said for white-middle class people. Therefore, it could be argued that differentiations among classes is primarily contested on everyday practices of consumption and how people live their everyday lives – where they eat, where they shop, what they do with their free time. In Mawerley, middle class people go to Waitrose, for example. Only jokingly, would it be discussed among

participants how they would not go to Asda because it was not for them, giving in this way, consumer spaces a classed nature.

During an Open Day I saw a prospective mother who I recognised from my gym. I approached her and asked her if she would like to talk to me about her decision to send her child to St Aber's. Initially, she seemed hesitant as she believed there was nothing extraordinary about her decision to look into the option of a private school for her child. Camilla said she only wanted the best for them, as all parents do. I told her that I only wanted to see what she was expecting from the school, so we arranged to meet over coffee and have a chat. The discussion revolved around her worry that her child would not only have the best education when it came to teaching pedagogy but also that the environment would be appropriate for them and would help them develop their full potential. Resulting from that, I asked what she meant by environment, and who she would exclude from that environment. I could feel that she was uncomfortable sharing her thoughts, as perhaps excluding was not the word she would have chosen.

I can tell you about my experience at school and I think this is not what I should be saying, as it is wrong to phrase it like this but this is how life is. I went to a comprehensive out of London, what is now an academy, and there was a mix of people. At some point, I was friends with this girl and her sister, who was older than us, not much older, and she was the typical girl on a council flat, single mother. There's nothing wrong with that necessarily. I think that the fact that they came from a broken family did not help, but this is life. So both girls were lovely, I wouldn't be friends with them now, but at the time they were very supportive, I was going through my own things as well. so, I first met their dad's side of the family, and they were not wealthy, but their house was, it was a council flat, but very tidy,

very calm. Sort of reminded me of my family, we were not well-off but there was order in the house. But then I met her mum's side, with the man she got remarried, and it was this breeding culture, chaos. They had this chaviness to them. This is bad me saying this. I don't mean to sound condescending, but if I had met this side of the family first, I don't think I would have become friends with them. I completely felt this is not what I can deal with. You could tell that the girls had issues, well I can tell now. But they were lovely girls, we have completely lost touch, but you know what I mean. The TV always on, on benefits, that kind of thing.

Admittedly, the language Camilla used was quite strong and invoked images of people living in squalor; her image of breeding culture could refer to animals rather than humans. However, 'lovely' 'these' people are, they have a 'chaviness' and 'breeding culture' attached to them; they claim benefits and live on council estates and have babies without realising their responsibility. Even though the word 'class' was never mentioned, the description invoked images of what the media and the political rhetoric would identify as poor white people. This mother wanted the best for her child in the sense that she would not only get an advantageous education but also that there would be no danger of mixing with those who could potentially make her child stray from socially acceptable pathways. Unlike Maxwell & Aggleton (2010) who find middle-class girls at private schools referring to those from other classes as 'chavs' or 'lower class people', in this study participants were more careful not to use such language; and it is only this mother who used such strong descriptions. My assumption would be that it was perhaps she felt somewhat more comfortable sharing her thoughts with me, someone who made the same lifestyle choices as her, ie. going to the same expensive gym.

Space and lifestyle as symbolic power

As mentioned above, the school sat between leafy streets, where large Victorian houses with gardens at the back were located. However, a ten-minute walk would take you to a very big estate. Admittedly, docudramas and chat-shows, populist, crime-based television depictions of youth offending, with teenage pregnancies, and council estates from 'hell', 'have made working-class subjects very much part of the mainstream cultural imagination' (Haylett, 2003: 61). Through this process estates are linked to working class subjects and they are represented metonymically; with negative depictions of crime and social decline. Politicians often address the issues with a promise that their government will fix the problems associated with estates, poor health, crime and lack of job opportunities. Tony Blair gave his first speech as PM outside Aylesbury Estate, one of the biggest estates in London, which no longer exists as it was demolished recently as part of a regeneration programme. Current Prime Minister, Theresa May, has focused her attention on Jams (Just About Managing), those families who have a job but no financial security and they are on the verge of poverty, with about 10 million adults in this position. Very often these families are found in council estates, despite the lack of clarity as to who Mrs May was portraying through her acronym. With such negative depictions of council estates and those who occupy them, it is not surprising that the parents of St Aber's and the school itself would not want the children to associate themselves with whoever lives there, the unknown Other. The fact that there is an estate in such proximity of the school had been in itself rather worrying. However, with the demographic changes of Mawerley, such estates are slowly being replaced.

For example, the Primrose Estate, a complex of buildings, used to be an estate where locals say seeing stabbings was not uncommon. A few years ago, the estate was taken over by developers and construction had started to regenerate it. As the website of the developers mentioned 'the accommodation on the estate no longer fits the needs of the residents'. Residents in this instance, can be both those with more money to afford a regenerated and renovated house

or those who might need to relocate in a less coveted neighbourhood. The first phase of the development would have been finished in late 2016, a few months after I had left the school. In the meantime, there were photos of the construction work that was happening in some of the social media of the school run by the librarian. In some of the posts he reminded students how it was only a few years ago that the warning ‘DO NOT WALK THROUGH THE PRIMROSE ESTATE’ was a very real threat. As he mentioned there were frequent muggings reported, scuffles with boys from other schools, and the possibility of the ‘posh’ students getting their school caps stolen and thrown on the train tracks. Also, if you were reported that you were using the shortcut you could get detention. It was not only the students who were banned from using the shortcut but the teachers as well. Although this was an opportunity for many students to do something naughty as little kids, it was not the behaviour expected from the older pupils, the post continued, as they were setting a good example along with the teachers. The estate was positioned as a threatening space, which students and teachers were asked to avoid. Those occupying the estate were also potentially deemed as threatening, as they were imagined through this post. The regeneration of the estate meant that some of the flats were passed on to private owners, with echoes of social cleansing described in that process, since regeneration and redevelopment can often involve pricing out current residents. Through this process, it was almost as if problems of crime and immoral behaviour were being demolished along with the physical buildings and relocated to a different area, with fewer affluent middle-class families.

Older residents, who I have come to know rather well while living in Mawerley, remember the main street being full of local shops that were selling DIY equipment, offering repairs, catering for the needs of manual jobs, and food for the diverse ethnic population, most of which have now been replaced. Through the changes in the shops, there are conceptualisations which pose questions of power dynamics within neighbourhoods, and how spatial practices have the power to establish a place as a space for exclusion. The buildings,

shops, and spaces for leisure activities gave Mawerley a classed ownership, where the middle classes could establish their position as the residents which have the power and authority to shape the space according to their tastes (Benson & Jackson 2012).

Mawerley could be described as an urban suburb, with a village feel to it. There were no fewer than three big parks and commons in close proximity to the school. Since I went running every morning, I noticed how personal trainers seemed to operate a thriving business in the area. Their services can cost between forty and eighty pounds per hour; however, on any day there were dozens of them with clients in the commons. The clients were mostly white women, in their late 30s and mid 40s or men of the same age but they were mostly seen at the weekend. The fitness culture characterising the middle classes has the potential to negatively reinforce class division in the way people view fitness, since lifestyle choices with regards to body image can be used to portray the image of a person who shows self-discipline and perseverance. McKenzie (2015) in her ethnographic study of a working-class estate in Nottingham described how the gym was a place where frustrated men would go and lift weights and do boxing. In this sense, exercising acquired a very different meaning there. It was not a space for socialising, but became part of the community in both a negative and positive way. It was a space for young people to be trained and possibly stay out of the streets, but also a place where drugs and stolen goods were exchanged. It was a gendered part of the estate as well, as women were 'allowed' but most of them did not feel this was their place. They would rather spent time with each other in their flats or the community centre. Contrastingly, in Mawerley, exercising acquired a different nature with the variety of exercise on offer acquiring a symbolic position in people's lives. It could indicate financial status, for people needed to be able to afford monthly fees of around a hundred pounds to take part in some of the activities offered. Similarly, the clothes worn that gym could cost up to £350 for a full outfit, including shoes and gym wear.

Admittedly, all the above can showcase how lifestyle and exercise choices require economic capital but also are part of one's habitus. Fitness spaces acquire a privileged and exclusionary character, either because of the high membership prices or the expensive attire. Therefore, exercising and taking part in sports is something that becomes of value among the middle classes. It was not surprising, therefore, that a school which valued self-discipline via sports, and had all the necessary facilities, such as a boathouse for rowing, a swimming pool, a field for rugby, to enable involvement in sports and exercise which are not usually found in state schools, was preferred amongst parents who valued such lifestyle choices. Active involvement in exercise and lifestyle choices which promote a healthier body resonate with the report published in 2010 by Sir Michael Marmot entitled 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'. The report acknowledged that wealthier people lead healthier lives. One of the main findings was that health inequalities are a direct result of social inequalities.

Jackson and Benson (2014) described the physical separation of those who exit Peckham Rye station: based on whether you turned right or left upon exiting the station, it became apparent where you lived, in the affluent part of the area or not. Similarly, in Mawerley, the train station was a physical barrier between Mawerley Lane and the expensive shops and the estates and the corner shops, or the chicken shops and the shops run by ethnic minority families which cater to their communities, or the chain shops and more expensive clothes shops and places for brunch. A distance of around 400 metres could reveal spatial divisions which were catering to different cultural needs. On the one hand, there was an abundance of chicken shops, five of them almost entirely opposite each other and a lot of corner shops with products from different countries. Walking past after school hours, the chicken shops were full of pupils who went to state schools in the area – recognisable by their uniforms. During my time at the school, I cycled past the street on a number of occasions, sometimes trying to determine whether any pupils from St Aber's would be there, eating chicken and chips after school. I never saw any of them, although admittedly, maybe it was

just the days I went by. However, I assumed that since the pupils from St Aber's had their meals for free, in a refectory which resembled a lot a fine restaurant, perhaps there was no need for that. The students had commented on several occasions how much they liked the food they had at the school and on several occasions when it was almost lunch time, they would shuffle in their seats, and start guessing what the menu had for that day. Not being a great cook myself, I very much appreciated the food there. However, it might also be what Darmon and Drewnowski (2008) note, that those from lower socioeconomic background are more often associated with consuming more unhealthy foods and those from higher socioeconomic strata tend to prefer more healthy foods. This can partly justify why there are such discrepancies as to what food outlets appear on certain streets and closer to what kinds of households.

In addition, another potential factor why St Aber's pupils never really went there was that they finished school very late. A lot of them who were prefects, in sports teams, in the drama team or involved in other co-curricular activities, mentioned that they often stayed at school until 7. Therefore, the idea of having nothing to do in the afternoon after school seemed quite alien to them. The structured life of St Aber's pupils did not only mean that they would not waste their time on unhealthy activities but also that they would create a disciplined character and learn to consider exercise and sport as a valued practice.

Classed distinctions

Before I started going to the school, as part of the talks organised at the school one speaker came to St Aber's to talk to the pupils about how they could secure a career at a time of endless internships. He, himself a rather public figure, would describe himself as a metropolitan liberal elite. It was easy to find online that he went to a comprehensive school, one that could be described as a rough one, but managed to succeed professionally despite the odds, as he said. Since I did not have the opportunity to see his speech I contacted him and asked if I could have

a look at the slides he used. James very kindly suggested that I could go with him to a different school, where he would give the same speech, but as part of a charity he volunteered for. The idea for the charity was that people who did not have the best of starts when it came to education managed to get a successful career. The schools that were visited were primarily comprehensives and academies. I was rather surprised when James mentioned that a lot of the schools did not really engage with the charity, as they believed this exercise was a waste of time, with students showing little interest most of the times. He also felt frustrated that while he was there, the teachers did not seem to try and engage students that much or prepare them, so they could ask questions and take full advantage of his presence there. However, as he said his motivation was that if he managed to make at least one pupil take a decision that would make his or her life better because he said something that inspired them, then that was worth his time. Having gone to a not very good or high achieving school himself he felt that if people had come to his school, maybe some of his friends would have had a very different life path. He acknowledged that if he did not have the support of his family, both middle-class professionals, who provided extra academic support while at school, he would not have had the career he had now. He probably would not have gone to university either, and a lot of his classmates had not. I could not help but wonder why he was needed in St Aber's where pupils had most of these structures already in place, but I could see that there was a need for someone other than teachers to talk to pupils about career choices.

The school we visited was in an outer zone of south London, an academy which based on their website were doing very well academically. Although from where St Aber's is the train journey to the other school was only about 15 minutes, the two areas could not be more different. It was not only the ethnic mix that would differentiate the two areas so much. It was also the shops which led to the school: shops where everything costs a pound, betting shops, fast food chains and a lot of boarded up shops. That was clearly a much poorer area. Arriving at the school, it was evident that the ethnic mix of the pupils was very

different and the facilities seemed much more modest. The locale could not be more different to the one where St Aber's existed.

The pupils were also very different to the ones in St Aber's: they seemed much less confident in the presence of an adult. I was sitting almost at the front row and almost no one wanted to sit next to me until the room was full and this girl came to sit next to me. A few minutes in the talk, she seemed a little bored, so she started talking to me.

Student: Miss, are you with the man?

Iro: Yes, I am.

Student: Is he your husband?

Iro: No, we just work together.

Student: I think I know him from the telly. Will you tell him my mum loves him?

Iro: Yes, I will but I am sure you can tell him yourself. You can ask questions at the end. Not sure if you want to share this with everyone but still.

Student: No, miss. I am too embarrassed. I was here because they told us to come. And I saw the instruments and I thought you would play music.

(we were sitting in a large hall which I assumed was their space for performances etc. and at the back there were some drums, presumably from a recent performance)

Iro: No, sadly neither of us can sign or play music.

Student: That's a shame, because I really like music. And I wanted to do GCSE in music and I thought I could ask you

about it. Because they told me no, no one does music, there is nothing to do with that. And I do other boring things.

Iro: I understand. I am sorry I cannot help you with this.

The whole conversation was rather odd, but it showed me how different the conversations I was having at St Aber's were compared to this school. The students seemed to have less confidence, with the girl saying she was embarrassed to ask questions an example of this. Moreover, even though there were almost a hundred pupils in the room, if not more; at the end of the talk no one asked questions. After a short break, there was a smaller focus group, where no more than twenty pupils who were studying Politics were invited to attend and had the opportunity to ask questions in a more informal environment. Interestingly, most questions revolved around what James thought about several socio-political issues: Trump being president, Brexit, the Russian role in elections. Although they were encouraged to be involved in the company James worked at, and take his email to contact him, none of them engaged with that. They seemed rather disengaged with the process throughout our visit. I also found the fact that the girl was discouraged to take music as a subject concerning; compared to St Aber's where individual interests were embraced and celebrated. Moreover, during talks at St Aber's pupils were engaged and eager to ask questions, perhaps confident to ask questions to adults who would seem to be intimidating to a lot of young pupils. I ask James if he noticed the difference.

Oh yes, definitely. But you see this is, not sure how to say it, it is normal. These pupils don't have the same social circle as those in private schools or grammar schools. They don't mix with high flyers, they don't have the same ambitions drilled in them from their pushy parents. So, you and I go there and they see like we are from another planet. It is a shame. the best example is my old school, I tried so many times to go and give

these talks but they don't want me there. They say my time will be wasted; the students will get nothing out of this. And you get high-flying schools that love me to have me there; but they don't need me there. The pupils have all the structures to apply for jobs, they have the confidence, they know people, they are networked. It is a different world.

James' observations reflected the psyche of the middle-class family. Through social capital, occupation of a privileged position was largely maintained, while those with fewer social encounters were left behind in the race of networking and building confidence.

Conclusion

Throughout the thesis, I have argued that it is the locality in combination with the school which act as a classed bubble. In this chapter, I have shown examples of classed identities acting as an emblem of spatial divisions where the classed Other becomes pathologised and placed vis-à-vis the normative cultural practices, which usually correspond to middle-class habits. I have shown how instances in the area reflect divisions among residents, showcased through everyday incidents, the shops and social spaces found around Mawerley. Therefore, although class has come to be considered as non-relevant in many levels, I have tried to demonstrate how it still enacts privileged habitus through choices people make on a daily basis, and as a result can function as a marker of social status moving beyond economic differences and into sociocultural practices.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

St Aber's and Mawerley can be seen as symbols of how white middle-class normativity can persist even in multicultural places such as London, with the quasi-marketisation of education being pivotal in how schooling becomes a good for consumption, with ensuing stratification not only on a school level but also on a wider social level. Paradoxically, despite the close proximity of the school to one of the busiest train stations in England, transporting thousands of diverse

people across the country throughout the day, St Aber's and Mawerley have managed to form a total locality and mirror each other: white, middle-class, exclusive to those with the economic, social and cultural capital to secure their position within this locality. Eager for more diversity, and yet very homogeneous, this total locality has created a white, middle-class bubble difficult to penetrate but even more difficult to escape. The last ten years have seen dramatic changes in the demographic of the area which are almost perfectly mirrored in the school. This empirical study has aimed to analyse how the school in conjunction with the wider area have promoted the construction of normative white, middle-class behaviours, while the participants agonised over this identification. This study has aimed to show how raced and classed positions are reproduced through everyday practices and primarily through the locale and the social and cultural behaviours which have come to represent what is of value. Through discourses of tolerance and liberal values, the participants problematize the nature of the school and the area; while trying to distance themselves from the white middle-classness which characterises both the school and the wider locale.

A rite of passage

The thesis started by describing the context and trying to provide an image of where the various incidents described took place. I want to include a newspaper description of Mawerley, as I believe it aptly summarises how Mawerley and St Aber's have come to be constructed and viewed in the popular imagination. An article published in the Telegraph in 2015, described the residents of Mawerley as going through a rite of passage:

“‘[Mawerley] is a rite of passage for many who emulate their parents’ property history by buying or renting here’”, says George Franks of Douglas & Gordon. “Playwrights are as likely to live next

door to hedge-funders, but the majority of [Mawerley] are defined by an entrepreneurial spirit, and most have made their own money.”

The article was entitled ‘*Where the middle classes live*’ and accompanied the description of Mawrley with the picture below.



Rite of passage: family houses in

The entrepreneurial spirit described above was where St Aber’s was basing its own unique selling point on. Perpetuating this cycle of middle-classness brought its own moral anxieties for the participants; however, the pull of a life which could afford them a secure future, came in direct contrast with some of their liberal and tolerant values. Therefore, the rite of passage, as described above, is unlikely to change in the near future.

As Mr Long, the Registrar described it:

They go to school here, they have their friends here, then they go for a gap year saving the world, all with daddy’s money.

They then go to university where they hide the fact they are rich and drink cheap wine. And it all starts again when they move back because they get a job in the City. It is a cycle, over and over and over again. It is the same with Perview and Konview.¹³ They are a bit edgier here, it is like Chelsea-lite.¹⁴

Mr Long roared with laughter as he described the participants as Chelsea-lite. I have argued throughout the thesis that these pupils do not come from extremely rich families and a lot of the families have shifted from working-class to middle-class in their parents' generation. In this sense, they could be described as Chelsea-lite, which is also why they chose a school which they did not believe was a 'hothouse' but put co-curricular high in their priorities. The fact they chose St Aber's did not perpetuate the cycle of educational inequality per se. Undeniably, it constituted part of the fundamental problem of unequal access to education, within the wider issue of social inequalities, which I have discussed in the chapters. Wider social structures allowed for practices which devalued others to continue, with a lot of such structures becoming entrenched in the psyche of the wider society and acquire normative status.

This thesis has tried to show what elements create this cycle: from the attempts of the Headmaster to create well-rounded go-getters to the total locale which allowed for white middle-class practices to become normative. Throughout the chapters I showcased that the participants problematized this privileged habitus and they were at times condemnatory of the whiteness and middle-classness of the school and its mirror, Mawerley. However, this condemnation was not enough to abolish the normative barriers that the participants had created. The calls for a community were inadequate in embracing those from dissimilar class and cultural backgrounds.

¹³ Changed names of nearby areas.

¹⁴ I have kept the name Chelsea because I want to show in some detail what he meant.

I drew from Goffman's *Asylums* to argue that Mawerley and St Aber's fit his description of a total institution in that they are 'a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life' (1961: 11). I am not suggesting that pupils at St Aber's and the residents of Mawerley were cut off from society in absolute terms; however, their lifestyle, professional and educational choices have the propensity to create bubbles for them to reside in.

I also discussed Foucault in my introduction in an attempt to show that neoliberal discourses have shifted the educational paradigm, and what can be deemed acceptable in the attempts of the middle-classes to equip their children with adequate capitals to secure success in life. Education has been placed at the core of the attempts to build human capital, and St Aber's has capitalised on that through making co-curricular its most prominent marketing strategy.

To answer some of the questions I set out in the introduction: I have argued that middle class parents still choose schools which create foundations for their children to create social, economic and cultural capital and as such, perpetuate their privileged status. Despite repeating the need for diversity and their increased tolerance, this has not materialized and if anything, the situation is worsening. The greatly improved academic results the school has managed to achieve, the reputation of the school as a welcoming and pleasant environment, and the influence families can have on each other, means that this diverse community in St Aber's and in Mawerley has not occurred. Middle-class families do not actively seek out schools with children like theirs, but inevitably they are drawn to them. I argue that this is because these middle-class enclaves absorb social and material resources and translate them into educational opportunities which are only afforded to certain people. In the absence of more diverse schools which fail to achieve the same academic results, middle-class

parents are not willing to imperil their children's life chances by providing them a 'sub-standard' education.

Notionally, middle-class white participants were willing and eager to engage with the diversity which London offered; however, as they concluded this will need to wait until university. The practices which they engaged with did not provide adequate shared spaces, with exclusionary and exclusive practices in place. Therefore, despite the co-existence in relatively close proximity with those from other social and cultural backgrounds, there was not meaningful interactions with those from poorer backgrounds or different ethnicities. The timetable of the pupils was rather circumscribed, which by default almost, translated into interactions primarily with those similar to them. The social circles of their families was vital when it came to how social groups were formed; a lot of parents for example, chose St Aber's because friends had recommended it. This division worked both ways, however. As Tariq, a Muslim student, explained his own friendships were not formed in the school but through his family circle and his mosque.

Even though schools and education tend to be perceived as the catalysts in how pupils shape their views, this thesis has argued that in reality, total localities alongside familial and social influences are more instrumental in how habitus is formed. Parental influence and aspiration and the locality where the pupils live and experience their everydayness are catalytic in that respect. I have argued that if Mawerley in itself had not formed into a white middle-class bubble over the last 10-15 years, and had retained some of the diversity it had before then, the story of St Aber's might have been different.

Although critical race, whiteness, and class theorists and others have been asking similar questions to mine for years, and have been giving answers to those questions, there is potential to enrich the dialogue and give different viewpoints to some of these questions. This study has tried to show how the

discourse of openness and tolerance does not presuppose and does not always translate into tangible communication across groups. It can be suggested then, that the lack of porosity in who is allowed to be part of these closed locales or who feels welcome, legitimate and valued in such spaces requires more scrutiny. It is often that non-normative values cannot acquire significance as long as they remain under the language of minority, immigrant, or disadvantage. It might be the case that for diversity to ensue and valorized practices to span across the social spectrum, the language which describes them needs to show that they are also of value and be given normative attributes.

This thesis has argued that as long as the school and the middle-class liberal participants do not acknowledge that the proclamations of being liberal and welcoming are not enough to ensure that classed and racialised subjectivities remain undervalued, the divisions will only become worse. The distinct lack of a language to acknowledge and problematize the inequalities of the school and the social reality of the total locale, was striking. Seeing the ‘sea of white faces’ everyday resembled being in an imaginary space amidst one of the most multicultural places in the world. It was an everyday reminder of how the ideal English locale has been envisaged over the years: pastoral, white, reminiscent of times when England was the savior of the world, through the imperial conquests. Not acknowledging how these ethnic bodies came to co-exist with Us in London was not questioned; contrastingly, these Others were asked to embrace the British Values, values so nebulous with regards to their Britishness, almost resembling the elusiveness of British identity itself.

Du Bois (1903) noticed how the main distinction between whites and blacks was that whites did not have to take into account the differences of the two groups daily; their relationship to privilege, therefore, was asymmetrical, as their everyday experiences were lived differently. St Aber’s and Mawerley both played an instrumental role in this respect, since the structures in place meant

that the participants rarely needed to think about the limitation in options, whether social or financial.

I believe, however, that what this thesis has also emphasized is not only the distances the white subjects impose on the racial Other but perhaps even more so, on the classed Other. The multicultural ethnic difference which the Ethnic Others can provide appeared desirable on the hypothesis that it could provide multicultural capital. The Classed Other, however, did not have anything to offer. As Patrick mentioned in the chapter 'Classed encounters' 'you take out what you give in'. By implication those who have not formed a neoliberal subjectivity and have been left relying on benefits and perpetuating a 'breeding culture' have not much of value to contribute. Their lifestyle choices can be contradictory to the go-getter choices of the white middle-class habitus. Therefore, the openness and welcoming nature of St Aber's and of the white middle-class participants was undermined by their perceived needs for safety and academic achievement. The fact that the school had improved academically since it has become more middle-class had acquired a causal relationship, despite rarely framed as such. St Aber's and the wider locality at times echoed Thatcher's proposal in the 1980s that what mattered for equality of outcomes was not based on resources but individual drive and resourcefulness (Biressi & Nunn 2013). As Harry, one of the Upper Sixth pupils, said in relation to his academic success:

Academically I think for, me it has been quite a natural process, in terms of year 7 and 8, I wasn't as keen on being, on getting amazing exam results. But naturally through the sort of exams we had to do in the winter and the summer, I got used to the idea of revision and found what works for me and started to appreciate getting good grades. So, I don't really feel like I have been pushed.

Being high achieving has been framed throughout the chapters as something natural, which just happened; therefore, for those that has not happened it might be their fault rather than a structural issue which needs to be addressed. There was never a real discussion on how the open doors which life offered were not always wide open for everyone; rather they had already been unlocked by their parents (Gillian 2006). Despite acknowledgements of this privilege, there was always a caveat that it was down to personal strive more than anything else.

Problematizing these discourses is imperative if education and schools are to become the democratic spaces which will eliminate structural inequalities and reduce longstanding social divisions and negate the assumption which seems to have gripped English policy making that if everyone were middle class, then there would be no problems in society (ibid.). Even though this study is limited in scope and has only focused on one school and one area and does not envisage to make any greater generalizations with regards to policy making, there are issues which were raised which can inform the public opinion. The thesis has argued that it is wider social structures which are in place for the pupils of St Aber's which contribute to their success. The fact that they were able, for example, to stay at school later in the day and engaged with co-curricular activities built 21st century skills and on a more mundane level, kept them away from unhealthy food choices. Perhaps then this study can inform policy making with regards to what structures can be implemented in that respect. However, this study is primarily an addition to the wider academic dialogue on the various issues raised throughout the study, as I outline them below.

Reviewing the key themes

Chapter One

This chapter introduced St Aber's and Mawerley and tried to provide the context of how both the school and the area have come to be formed and what position

they occupied within wider social contexts. I tried to explain how the school and the area came to mirror each other, and how it was this process which I believe shaped the ideas and perceptions of pupils and other participants alike. During all the chapters I drew from incidents and interviews both from St Aber's and Mawerley, so I think it is important to describe the two contexts in some detail. I have outlined some of the processes of the school and the wider locality and how they contribute to ideas of success within and outside St Aber's. I also discussed why I believe studying the middle classes is important and how it contributes to broader discussions of educational achievement and social divisions.

Chapter Two

In this chapter, I have provided a review of the literature which underpins this study and show how similar themes are discussed elsewhere. I have described how other studies have looked at themes of exclusion on an everyday level, with practices which span from gentrification processes to exclusive contexts which provide access to those who seemingly belong to particular milieu. I then discussed how race and class can be such defining elements, which further consolidate people's notions of who should be allowed in their group, with reference to the literature. I suggest that some classed and raced divisions stem from anachronistic ideas of what the ideal English countryside once represented, with its green spaces and white middle-class dwellers. I argue that this image has persisted despite multiculturalism being the norm in cities such as London. Stemming from the description of quintessential Englishness, I have looked at how notions of Englishness and Britishness are contested and can also form reference points for differentiation among groups. I then analysed in some detail, notions of race and class and how they act as structural barriers for meaningful interactions among diverse groups. I looked at the concept of tolerance and how class and race interplay with notions of the liberal, tolerant middle classes. I conclude by looking at how lifestyle choices can have an impact on how people

are viewed and what practices become valorised, by discussing the literature on everyday choices which acquire a distinct position in people's lives.

Chapter Three has given a detailed description of how the school operates. It focussed on the attempts of the school, and in particular the Head Master of the school, Mr Anderson to shift the rhetoric away from hothousing and focus on a 'business model' which promotes creating well-rounded individuals. The chapter has argued that the opportunity the school offered to students to explore their potential through co-curricular activities, attracted the middle-class parents of the area who were eager to ensure their children achieved academically but not at the expense of their mental and physical well-being. The few attempts to acknowledge the economic and social capital required to participate in some of the activities promoted by the school was telling of the white, middle-class normativity that such activities require. The can-do attitude which the school fostered created confident individuals, while having the potential to pathologise those seen as less driven or less high achieving. I have argued in the chapter that the behaviours of pupils were not solely constructed via the workings of the school. I believed it was, rather, a combination of parental involvement and the total locality which reflect a self-assured nature, which had come to be mirrored by the school. The presence of the Head Master had been instrumental in shaping the rhetoric which the school embraced. A rhetoric which, in a very business-like approach, attracted the customers of Mawerley. The privilege the students employed did not stay unproblematised by the participants, but through the commonality of their privilege in the total locale they resided, it had become normative and as a result, accepted.

Chapter Four has presented the discourse of values, with British Values being the catalyst for discussions of what is of value. By examining the discontent of the school for having to implement British Values in a way which implied they had not been doing so already, it showed how the introduction of British Values in schools was not met with pleasure from teachers and pupils alike. The

disagreement of what should constitute British Values was discussed in detail, while also examining how the rhetoric of British Values had the potential to pathologise and exclude those who hold other values. Through post-colonial considerations, the chapter continued by questioning who and what can be named British or English. The empty or indeterminate significance of both terms allowed for multiple interpretations and acceptance of some people while excluding others, something which was also discussed with relation to notions of the nation and the Empire. Interestingly, these discussions took place in a white middle-class context, where the Other was rarely physically embodied in the total locale.

Chapter Five has looked at how race and racism are constructed in a white middle-class context. With a paltry number of ethnic minority students at the school, discussions of race and racism were difficult to ask. The chapter focused on the narratives of the few ethnic Others at the school to show how race is a contested issue and has a janus-faced existence at the school and the wider locale. Through documentaries and TV programmes which portrayed the difference in practices of the various communities, it was visible how non-normative values and practices became devalued, often on the basis that their practicality or applicability was not understood. Through proclamations of colour-blindness, misoxeny becomes latent, yet ever-represent. The post-imperial British polity and the struggle over the years to integrate the Other, became very prominent in this chapter as participants discussed their existence in a white bubble.

Chapter Six has discussed the indistinct character class acquired in the total locale of St Aber's and Mawerley. Class was probably one of the most defining features in the decisions participants made in their lives, yet it remained an abstract concept when discussed. Definitions of class, when provided, were rather accurate, but for a lot of them class and its discontents remained as a

feature outside their subjecthood. This chapter looked at the wider locality more in-depth, as I believe, it was banal practices and everyday occurrences which could most aptly showcase the persistence of classed divisions. Whereas racism was more readily criticized, class had acquired a nefarious existence in terms of its rhetoric. This chapter has argued that classed divisions are very much still in place, with cultural and lifestyle choices at the forefront of these divisions.

After St Aber's.

A mother at an Open Day asked me why my research was relevant or why I was suggesting it was something new, a lot of the things I was saying, she suggested, were common sense. *We all know they happen, but no one, in essence, gets hurt, life carries on.* I hope that my thesis has shown that despite the fact that a lot of the points raised are common sense, the fact that we discuss them in such a matter-of-fact manner does not make them justifiable nor does it mean that we should not create spaces that these practices are contested so as structural positions of power shift and change.

In the introduction, I described the change of the school over the years: the roughness of ten years ago, assumingly caused by the diverse student body, had been gradually replaced by pleasant white middle-class pupils. Those who had been at the school long enough commented on this process and suggested it was a shame that the cohort was not more diverse, but the current status of the school was too enjoyable to change, and consisted a pleasant change from the unconstructive years of St Aber's. What was missing from these discussions, however, was what happened to those pupils who did not make the cut. Those who were left out of St Aber's, and those who were pushed out of the locale altogether, not able to afford the prices in Mawerley.

I hope that this thesis will manage to raise questions on why or how affluence which is predominantly associated with middle-class choices has the potential to devalue other practices. hooks gives the perspective of a black person on how white privilege creates social imbalances:

white people see themselves as open-minded but still they protect what they have by all means necessary. [...] they recognize multiculturalism and celebrate diversity but when it comes to money and class they want to protect what they have, to perpetuate and reproduce it – they want more [...] the fact that they have so much while others have so little does not cause moral anguish, for they see their good fortune as a sign they are chosen, special, deserving (2010: 3).

St Aber's and Mawerley do not exist in a social vacuum – recreating Chelsea-lite subjects might be an amusing description but the consequences of that cycle have wider-reaching effects. As this thesis has tried to show white middle-class subjects problematize some of their privileges; however, this is not enough to ensure that their bubble is burst, nor that devalued subjects can compete on a level playing field. As hooks (ibid.) continues people think that we live in a meritocratic society where if you work hard enough you can reach the top, but as she suggests there would not be a top if there was an equal projection in people's lives.

I want to conclude with Paul Gilroy's words which I believe exemplify why I think it is important to raise these questions of obdurate classed and raced divisions and the oblivion of how harmful they can be; if not, there is a risk of creating even more contentious societies.

Britain's pathologically present anti-Nazi past does not render its anxious, economically stalled citizenry immune to the

protean seductions of fascism and racism today [...] It is the effect of an accumulated racism and misoxeny which has been significant in fluctuating its presence in the British political life since the end of World War two. That persistence may be an embarrassment but the customary instruction paired with it, 'Go back to where you come from!', has lost nothing of its timeless force and comes close to providing a constant point of reference and orientation, even today. Whether that neurotic imperative is a vestige of the past or whether its contemporary currency is a harbinger of frightful things to come, is in our hands. If no further outrages are to be perpetrated by David Copelands or Anders Breiviks, these rhetorical habits must be broken and our political system adjusted accordingly so that it can acknowledge the perils of a predicament in which the integrity of our ebbing democracy may itself be at stake (2012: 394-5).

The proclaimed lack of viable alternatives for the participants in this study were not always created by real absences of how things could be different but perceived ones. The projection of the school is not likely to change in the immediate future, neither will the demographics of Mawerley. Whether the rite of passage will remain the same in the coming years remains to be seen, as the pupils expressed moral inhibitions with regards to their privileged status. However, for as long as middle-class values continue to be seen as valued and neoliberal discourses are perpetuated through educational practices, the inequitable classed and raced barriers will most likely continue to exclude and devalue certain subjecthoods while spatial divisions will create bubbles where some exist and thrive academically or socially while others are excluded and have to manage through whatever structures are afforded to them.

Whatever the future holds for Mawerley, with its million-pound properties, and St Aber's, with the advent of a new Head Master, it is unlikely

that the structural barriers which exist among the groups described above will fade away. Through my own journey as a new researcher I have come to realise the importance of exploring these barriers and trying to understand what makes it so hard for meaningful co-existence to occur. By unpacking these concepts, it might become evident how to shift some of the preconceptions about the Other which can easily become engrained. My own relationship with the area has changed as I have come to realise my own position within the white, middle-class bubble I described in the thesis. Therefore, the reflexivity which I described in my methods chapter is something which, I hope, I will be able to showcase as I develop as a researcher.

Moreover, I want to believe that some of the concepts and issues I have highlighted will be developed further, either by others or myself, in the future. For example, the concept of ‘total localities’, which drew from Goffman’s idea of the ‘total institution’ might inform ways of studying institutions within their wider social context; the case study of Mawerley, which showcased that gentrification can take more than one forms can be developed further and analysed vis-à-vis other gentrified pockets in the UK or elsewhere; the concept of ‘well-roundedness’ and how it can affect middle-class aspirations of schooling is another potential area of further analysis. These are some of the areas which will require further research and will need to be placed more firmly within wider sociological debates.

Lastly, if I was to position myself within the wider sociological community and highlight what I have learnt through my own experience as a new researcher, this would be that intersectionality should be something at the forefront of our research. I would have found it difficult to unpack some of the concepts I was exploring if I was not able to examine them in a rounded and multi-faceted manner. I am glad I persisted with conducting qualitative research and early on managed to gain access to conduct an ethnography: the value of immersing myself in the field and being able to collect rich data was the most

rewarding part of the research process. The nuances which are afforded via this kind of research are invaluable and have the potential to inform social research on a more structural level. Therefore, I believe that as I progress my journey in research, I will keep these lessons in mind while striving to be a reflective researcher.

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Appendix 1: Profiles of those mentioned in the thesis (interviews)

Staff	
Mr Anderson Headmaster Oxbridge educated White, I would describe him as upper-class, British A man in his late 40s/early 50s He would soon be leaving St Aber's for a corporate role	Mr Jones Second Master White, British, family from Wales The person who gave me access to the school and was my main gatekeeper A man in his late 50s
Mr Evans Director of studies White, British A man in his late 50s He had been at the school for more than 20 years	Mr Simons White, British A man in his late 50s Teacher of Politics and History I mainly attended his classes he had been at the school for more than 20 years
Father Hunt Chaplain at the school His family are from the West Indies A prominent member at the Liberal Democrat party – often expressed his political views at the school In his 60s	Mrs Eccles Head of Sixth Form She had been at the school for 8 years A woman in her late 40s White, British
Mr Long Registrar British, white A man in his late 40s Responsible for rowing	Mr Adams Head of Politics He grew up in South America and would often make some comparisons with the state education system there. As he was younger than a lot of other teachers, in his late 30s, I think his main strength with the pupils was the fact that he was able to connect with them through different ways
Mr Elliot Head of History He was Oxford educated and the students really praised the fact that he had great subject knowledge In his late 30s, English, white	Mrs Carter Head of Modern Languages She grew up abroad and was educated in Switzerland and was critical of the English education system in general. In her 40s, English, white

Mr Brown Head of Upper Sixth I only really talked to him once and although I saw him around we never really talked very much In his late 40s, English, white	Mr McKenna Head of the parents' association I never met him, we only exchanged emails as he was very busy A very successful businessman
Pupils	
Jeremy Upper sixth Headboy English, white	George Upper Sixth History focus group English, white
Alex Upper Sixth History focus group English, white	Emily Upper sixth History focus group English, white
Henry Upper Sixth History focus group and Politics class English, white	Harry Upper sixth History focus group English, white
Simon Upper Sixth Politics class and History focus group English, white	Matthew Upper Sixth History focus group Mother from Iran, but he never visited British, mixed race but looked white
Olivia Upper sixth White and British	Hugo Upper Sixth History focus group British, white His dad is Norwegian
Oliver Lower Sixth English, white	Jonathan Lower sixth Politics class English, white
Tariq Upper Sixth Family from Pakistan Asian	Elisa Headgirl History focus group British and white, her mum is Northern Irish
Jonny Upper sixth Academic and drama scholar	Smita Upper Sixth

White, English	Parents from India but she has never visited India. Asian
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Appendix 2: Initial Questionnaire

General information (section 1)

1. What year are you in?

2. What is your ethnic group?

3. Are you (Please circle)
Female / Male
4. What is the profession of your parents?
Mother _____
Father _____
5. Do you self-identify as (please circle)
working class/ middle class/ upper class/ none
6. What are your plans after you finish school?

7. What profession would you like to follow?

8. What level of education do your parents have? (please circle)
Mother postgraduate/ graduate/ vocational/ other _____
Father postgraduate/ graduate/ vocational/ other _____
9. What is your nationality? _____
10. What is the nationality of your parents?
Mother _____
Father _____
11. What nationality are your grandparents?

12. What is your first language?

13. Do you practise a religion? If yes, which one?

14. What is your postcode? (Just the first part, eg. SW11)

15. Do you think that the area in which you live affects your outlook on life? If yes, in what ways?

London and Britain (section 2)

1. What defines someone as British?
2. Is there a distinction between English and British? Can you explain your answer?
3. What are the benefits of London being a multicultural city?
4. What are the disadvantages of London being a multicultural city?

5. Do you think that you personally are experiencing the diversity of the city as much as you could? Why yes/ If not, why not?
6. What would you define as core British Values?
7. The British government has defined British Values as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance? What do you understand by these?
8. Do you think that Britain is a truly tolerant country? Could you elaborate on your answer?
9. Do you think that after the recent incident in Paris, Britain should be more or less tolerant? Why?
10. Do you think Britain should leave the EU? Why?
11. If you could vote, which political party would you vote for? Why?

The school setting (section 3)

1. How would you define the ethos of St Aber's?
2. Do you agree with the school's ethos? Why?
3. From your experience of the school, which do you think are the values that St Aber's promotes?
4. What are the most important ethical and moral values that define who you are?
5. Do you feel a strong loyalty to your school? If yes, how or when is this expressed?
6. Do you think that Life Skills and the Sixth Form programme have helped you shape your ideas on how you view others or yourself? If yes, in what ways?
7. Can you describe one guest speaker who has influenced your ideas or values or sense of identity? How?
8. Are there certain elements of St Aber's that make you feel proud of your school? What are they?
9. What is the single best thing about attending St Aber's?
10. If you were not attending St Aber's, would you like to be in a different private school or a state school? Explain your reasons.
11. Do you think that the school promotes tolerance and inclusivity? If yes, in what ways?
12. How do you feel about the fact that your school can be described as white?
13. In what ways do you think education is beneficial to you as an individual?

14. Do you think education should place more emphasis on (please circle only one)
- Preparing students for academic achievement (eg. Get into a top university)
 - Helping students to develop social skills (eg. Emotional intelligence)
 - Giving students the opportunity to contribute to the betterment of society (eg. Raise awareness on social issues)

Society (section 4)

1. What do you understand by the welfare state?
2. Do you think that the welfare state in Britain is sustainable? Why?
3. Do you think there are groups of people who are misusing the welfare state? (please circle) YES / NO
4. If yes, who are these groups and in what ways are they misusing the system in place?
5. What is your opinion on the position of the government in relation to migration/ refugee movement and asylum seeking?